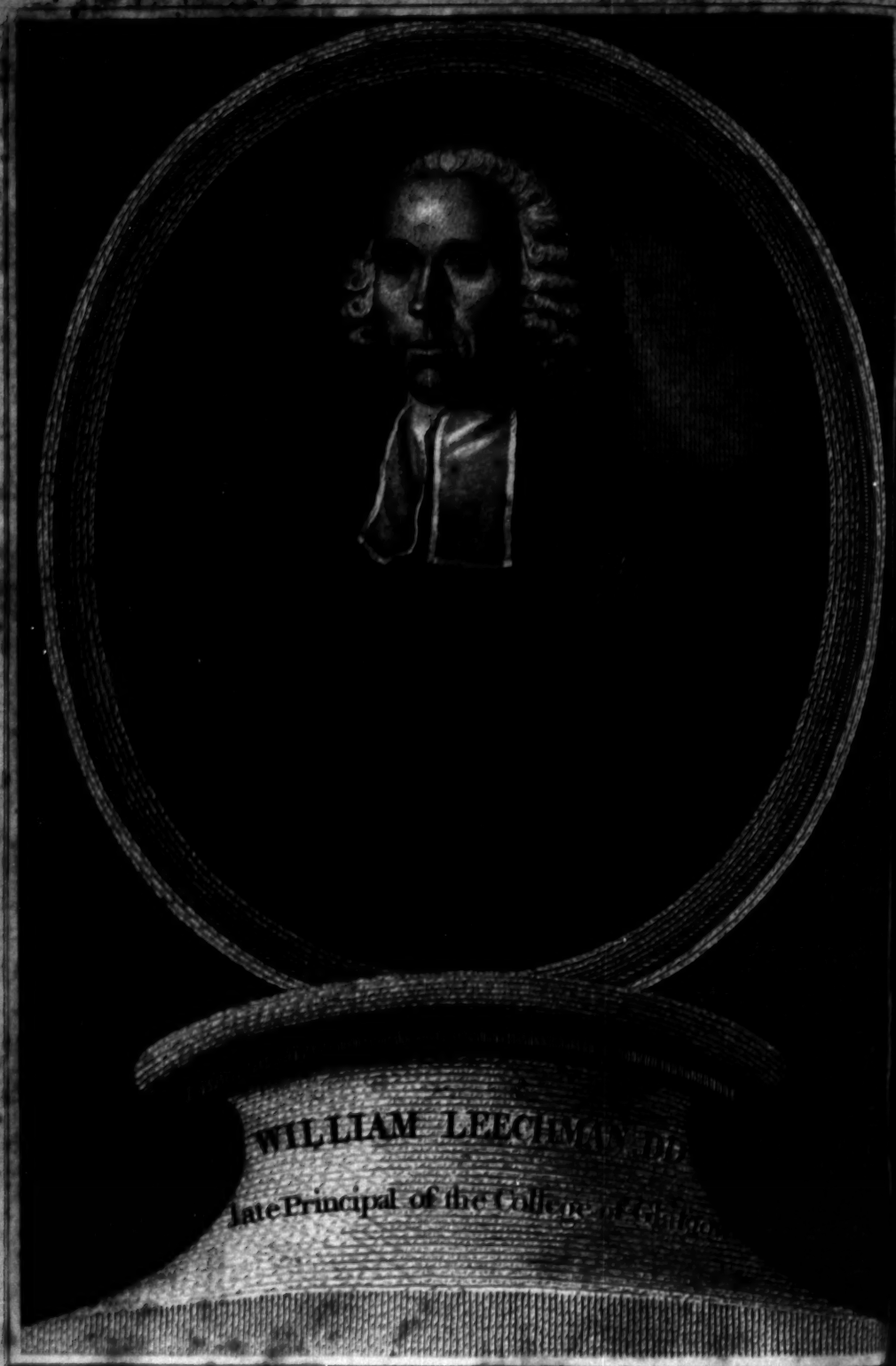
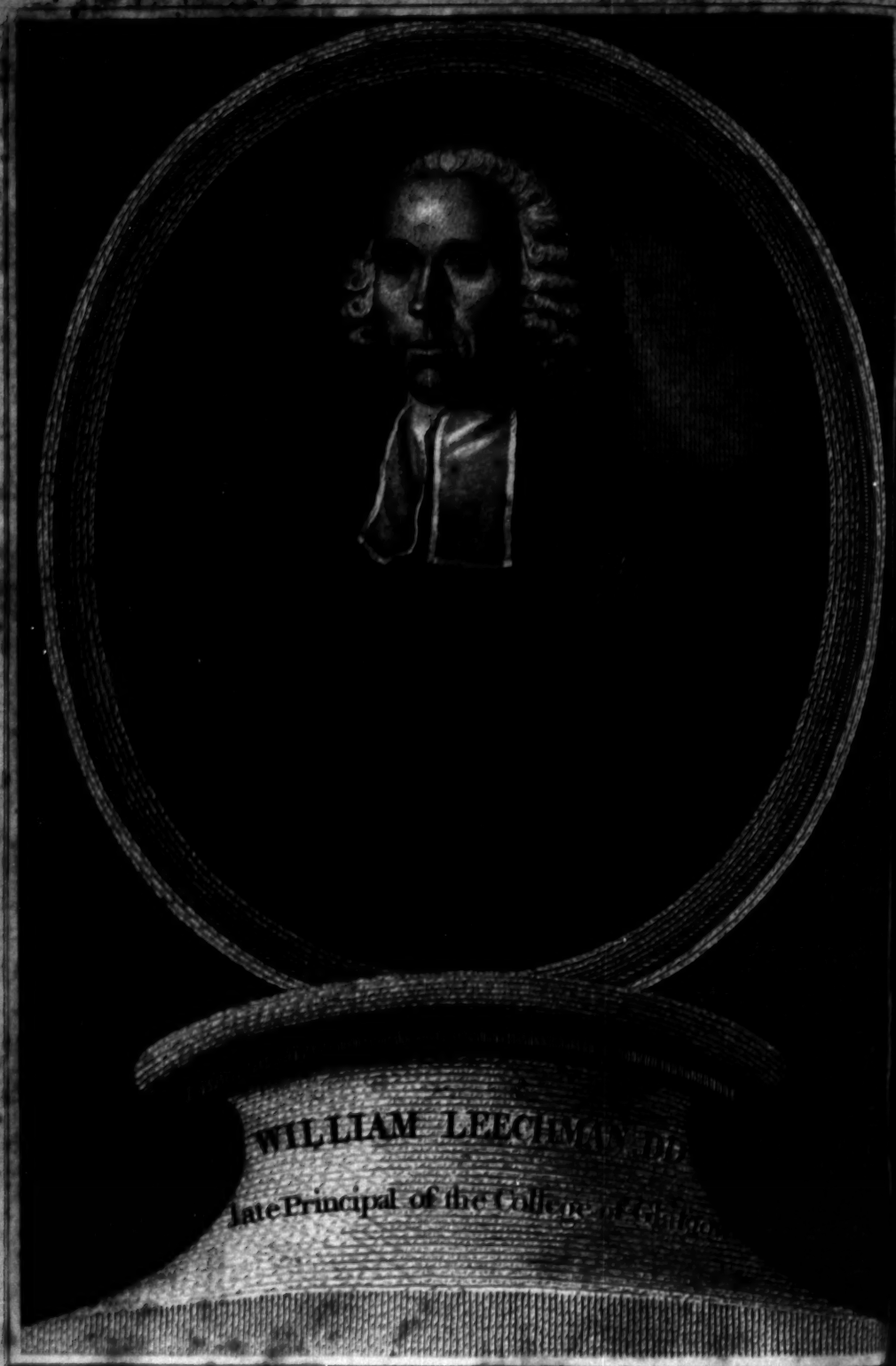




Engraved by J. Caldwell from a Picture painted by W. ...

London, published as the Act directs March 1789, by J. Caldwell.



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S E R M O N S,

BY

WILLIAM. LEECHMAN, D. D. K

LATE PRINCIPAL OF THE COLLEGE OF GLASGOW.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
SOME ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE,
AND OF HIS LECTURES.

By JAMES WODROW, D.D.
MINISTER AT STEVENSTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

L O N D O N:

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MDCCLXXXIX.



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be faithfully inserted.

Dr. Leechman was born in the year 1706.
He was the son of William Leechman, a

DR. LEECHMAN,

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS

LECTURES.

of the University of Glasgow, under the care of Mr. H. H.

Dr. Leechman was a student at the Uni-

DR. WILLIAM LEECHMAN was one

of the few whom Divine Providence

sometimes raises from an humble to a

distinguished and useful station in life,

chiefly by the influence of eminent talents

and amiable virtues. It may not be un-

pleasing to trace the steps of this progress.

To his numerous friends and scholars, who

knew him thoroughly, and to the world,

who have formed a favourable judgment

of him from his writings, some account of

his life may perhaps be acceptable. Of the

early and retired part of it little can now be

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recovered.

recovered. Any thing, however, worthy of notice, which has come to the knowledge of the writer of these memoirs, shall be faithfully marked.

Dr. Leechman was born in the year 1706. He was the son of William Leechman, a farmer, who lived in the parish of Dolphinton, in the shire of Lanark, and always maintained a character respectable for piety and integrity. His son learned the rudiments of the languages at the parish-school of Dolphinton, under the care of Mr. Henderson, who was afterwards a clergyman. He completed his education at the University of Edinburgh, not without some assistance from the family of Baillie of Jerviswood, a gentleman of note in that country. The family considered themselves as under an obligation to Mr. Leechman's father, who, when a young man, at the head of two or three of his companions, had the spirit to take down one of the quarters of Mr. Robert Baillie *, affixed to the

* This gentleman was one of the last who suffered for conscience sake by the prosecution of that tyrannical court. He

the Tolbooth of Lanark, by the orders of the Privy Council, and to give it a decent interment.

At the College of Edinburgh Mr. Leechman distinguished himself by his proficiency in the different branches of literature, to which he applied. This soon procured him the notice and friendship of Mr. Bowie, minister of Dolphinton, and Mr. Bradfute, minister of Dunfyre, who was himself an excellent classical scholar. These two reverend gentlemen recommended him to Mr. Geddes of Kirkurd, in the shire of Tweedale, as a proper tutor to his eldest son. In his ingenuous mind Mr. Leechman carefully cultivated the love of knowledge and the seeds of virtue, which displayed themselves remarkably afterwards, when he came to act his part in public life. Having practised at the bar for some years with growing reputation, this young gentleman was cut off in his bloom, deeply regretted by his family and his friends.

He was executed at Edinburgh Dec. 24, 1684, with a precipitancy and barbarity which sufficiently marked the complexion of those unhappy times.

THE LIFE OF

Mr. Leechman began his theological studies about the year 1724, and continued to prosecute them under Dr. William Hamilton, then Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh, a man much esteemed at that time in Scotland, for the wisdom and good temper with which he conducted the debates of the General Assembly, and no less esteemed for his learning, judgment, and candour, as a teacher. I have heard Dr. Leechman say, that he was under great obligations to Professor Hamilton; that he learned much from him, in many points, about which the Professor spoke his mind openly; and that, young as he was, he learned something also in other points, about which the Professor said nothing. The silence of such a man struck him, it should seem, and led him to investigate the causes of it.

After Mr. Geddes had no further occasion for a tutor, the Rev. Mr. Bradfute again recommended Mr. Leechman as a proper person to superintend the education of a young gentleman in Renfrewshire, Mr. Mure of Caldwell, in which recommendation Mr. Bradfute was joined by
Mr.

Mr. Alexander Dunlop, Greek Professor at Glasgow. This was Mr. Leechman's first introduction into the west country, destined to be afterward the principal scene of his usefulness; and it broke off, in a great measure, his connexion with the few friends he had acquired in the east and south. Yet he never forgot his obligations to Mr. Bradfute, but retained a warm sense of them throughout the whole course of his life. Long after the death of his benefactor * he was ever ready to do the most friendly offices in his power to his children and grand-children.

It was in the summer of the year 1727, that Mr. Leechman was introduced into the family of Caldwell, where he had an opportunity of displaying the innate goodness of his heart in different ways. Mr. Mure's grand-uncle was then alive, confined to his bed, and who soon became so fond of his new guest, as to prefer his company and conversation to that of all his other friends. Mr. Mure himself was then very young,

* His son, the present minister of Dunfyre, has obligingly communicated to me most of the above particulars.

but equally promising, in point of amiable dispositions and abilities, with Mr. Geddes. So that Mr. Leechman was very fortunate in meeting with two young minds so susceptible of instruction and improvement; and they no less fortunate in meeting with proper culture under the care of a man so well qualified to bestow it. His general idea of the manner of conducting the business of education was this: to observe the natural progress of the mind, and to adapt all instruction and assistance to the gradual unfolding of its different faculties, to promote its improvement in knowledge, not by dictating *our* opinions and judgments to the young mind, but by leading it to form *its own*; not by encouraging its indolence with unseasonable assistance, but by accustoming it to exert, as soon as it is capable, its own powers, and thus gradually to form habits of observation, reflexion, and inference; in short, to place the materials of knowledge before the young mind, to erect, as it were, a proper scaffolding, and thus enable it to raise itself. He thought that we ought to pursue much
the

the same means in leading it to the practice of virtue ; to wit, to stir up and call forth its own active exertions, by the best motives that can be thought of ; watchfully to guard it against contracting bad habits ; to lead it by exercise to acquire good habits ; and to strengthen these by every possible means. Such indeed were his sentiments of education, ripened by much experience *, and reduced to practice in a far larger sphere than that which he now filled : but there is little doubt that he pursued this plan at least in the education of his last pupil ; and he had the pleasure to see his judicious and assiduous efforts crowned with success. Mr. Mure distinguished himself so much by his literature, his abilities, and agreeable manners, that he was scarce come of age, before he had the honour of being elected to represent his county in parliament, though his fortune in the county was not so large as to entitle him to form expectations of that distinction. He continued to sit for se-

* They are taken from a MS. discourse of his on the subject, read to a literary society.

veral successive parliaments, and afterwards filled some of the first offices in Scotland with reputation. As a country gentleman, he was intelligent, active, and exemplary in the improvement of his own estate. He was a zealous supporter of all schemes of public utility; and both in public and private life, his conduct was uniformly wise, amiable, and honourable.

The family of Caldwell lived, during the summer and harvest months, in the country; and during the rest of the year, at Glasgow, for the sake of the education of the children. There Mr. Leechman had an opportunity of seeing the method of teaching at another university, and attending any of the lectures he pleased, especially those of Professor Hutcheson, who was brought to that college in the year 1729. His lectures on natural theology, ethics, jurisprudence, and on the evidences of Christianity, were a valuable source of improvement to the more advanced as well as to the younger students. Even his conversation, various, cheerful, and animated to a high degree, was not only an

DR. LEECHMAN.

an agreeable entertainment, but very instructive and improving to those who had the happiness of enjoying it. His colleague, Professor Dunlop, was not much behind him in learning, talents, and benevolence. These two eminent men had the discernment to distinguish Mr. Leechman's modest merit, and to prognosticate his future advancement. They admitted him into all the familiarity of friendship. Here he had likewise an opportunity of cultivating more equal friendships with some of his fellow-students, which continued indissoluble through life; such as Messrs. Clark, Craig, Fleming, Warner*, and some others, clergymen well known in the west of Scotland, and admired for talents, and a spirit similar to Mr. Leechman's, though the exertion of them was confined within a narrower sphere than his.

About the beginning of the year 1731, Mr. Leechman offered himself for probationary trials to the Presbytery of Paisley, within whose bounds he resided: and after

* Afterwards ministers of the parishes of Neilston, Glasgow, Killmalcolm, and Kilbarchan.

delivering

delivering six different kinds of discourses prescribed to him, and going through the other usual pieces of trial with approbation, he was in the month of October licensed to preach the gospel by that Presbytery. He continued a preacher, without any prospect of preferment, for no less than five years. This, however, was certainly on the whole a favourable circumstance in his lot; for, unembarrassed with the cares and duties of a fixed charge, he was at liberty to oblige his clerical friends, by preaching for them occasionally; and he had full leisure, in the very spring of life, to pursue his own studies, both in the country and at Glasgow, with all possible advantage.

To give those who are strangers to Dr. Leechman a more perfect idea of him, as he appeared in the scenes of private life, before he stepped forward into the public view, I shall take the liberty to transcribe part of a letter I had the honour to receive from a lady, one of his most early and intimate friends. Her pen, more delicate and masterly than mine, has hit off several distinguishing features so happily, that every
one

one acquainted with the original, even in the later periods of life, may discover the striking likeness of the picture.

“ At that time of life,” she says, “ he
“ was tall and thin: his person and manner
“ rather awkward, than otherwise; but his
“ face was mild, pleasant, and very ex-
“ pressive of the inward character: every
“ passion was painted in it as it rose in his
“ mind. In company, he spoke little; but
“ his countenance, and a certain agitation
“ of body, expressed his feelings more
“ forcibly than could be done by words;
“ and when words were added to this,
“ either in the pulpit, or in conversation,
“ it had often a wonderful effect on the
“ hearers. In company, especially when
“ the conversation turned on trifles, he had
“ often the appearance of being absent:
“ but this was not the case, at least if one
“ may judge from the quick discernment
“ he had of the leading passions and cha-
“ racters of others, which seemed to be a
“ remarkable part of his own. Nothing
“ touched him so sensibly, as the being
“ repulsed by persons he had formed a fa-
“ vourable

“ vourable opinion of. To such he was at
“ pains to get himself recommended. He
“ enjoyed their company with the highest
“ relish; and there were scarce any of real
“ worth, who did not esteem him more
“ and more in proportion to their opportu-
“ nities of being thoroughly acquainted
“ with him; for that ardent expression
“ above mentioned, joined with his warm
“ zeal for virtue, seldom failed to gain such
“ hearts.

“ Though the sensibility of his mind was
“ great, yet it never moved him to anger.
“ A wave with his hand, and an impatient
“ look, shewed when he was displeased.
“ It is doubtful if any thing more appeared
“ through his whole life. He had great
“ pleasure from music, if tolerably good.
“ It moved him with a kind of transport,
“ and seemed to agitate his whole frame.
“ Yet he was a very indifferent performer
“ himself; for it was with difficulty he
“ could begin a psalm tune. He enjoyed
“ the same pleasure from the works of na-
“ ture, which led him to be much in the
“ fields.—There are certain feelings in the
“ mind,

“ mind, which I cannot describe—there
“ was a propriety, a purity, a simplicity, a
“ disinterestedness, which were all innate
“ in him. He was warm in his devotions.
“ His family prayers affected every hearer.
“ He was warm in his friendships. If he
“ had a leading passion, it was an ardour
“ for the happiness of mankind, and espe-
“ cially for the virtue and happiness of his
“ own friends. From the ardour of his
“ temper, it might be supposed that he was
“ warm in an argument. But this was
“ not the case. No person could be more
“ cool than he was. He weighed the
“ reasons of his antagonist, and paused.
“ Then he would endeavour to place the
“ matter in a new light; and if that did
“ not succeed, he would often, by a few
“ pertinent questions, make his antagonist
“ correct himself.”

In the year 1736, the parish of Beith, where the family of Caldwell usually resided, became vacant. The right of presentation was vested in the Eglinton family; but the late Countess, Susannah, waving the exercise of that right, recommended

Mr.

Mr. Leechman, in a letter to the Presbytery of Irvine. And in consequence of this, and the unanimous call or concurrence of all ranks in the parish, he was in the month of October ordained Minister of Beith.

In this populous and extensive charge he continued about seven years; living sometimes in his Manse, where he had servants, but for the most part at Caldwell. The duties of a clergyman in Scotland, regularly performed, as they generally are to this day, especially in country parishes, are very laborious. He preaches twice or thrice every Sabbath; catechises his whole parish annually, and visits them as often in a pastoral way, by which is meant, a stated visit to every family, accompanied with a short exhortation and prayer. Besides these regular offices, he visits occasionally every distressed and dying person in his parish. Thus the pastor is considered as the common friend and father of his people, to whom they are accustomed to look up for advice in their spiritual, and often too in their temporal concerns; and he is accessible to them at all hours. These

duties Mr. Leechman performed, not merely with propriety and decency, but with an uncommon concern for those under his care. The affability and perfect simplicity of his manners; his great tenderness to the distressed; his liberality, which often exceeded the expectation even of those who applied to him for relief; above all, his earnest and animated manner in the public offices of religion, especially the devotional part of them: these things could scarce fail to gain the hearts of an unprejudiced people. The conquest in the present case was indeed very complete; for, during the clamour and alarm about heresy, which was afterwards raised upon Mr. Leechman's removal to Glasgow, it was dangerous for any person to open his lips against him within the limits of his old parish.

While Mr. Leechman was Minister at Beith, the Secession began in Scotland. The first leaders of that party erected their tents in the fields, and preached to prodigious crowds of people, drawn together by curiosity, and other motives. They made a strong effort to inflame the minds of their hearers

hearers against the unpopular measures of the General Assembly, and against the doctrine and lives of the established clergy. Mr. Leechman took little notice of these topics in the pulpit, nor of those preachers; only he let his own people know, that it would give him sincere joy, if any of them should reap more benefit and improvement from *their* instructions than from *his*. When they came into his parish, he went himself to hear them, in company with his parishioners. And on one occasion, after a more than ordinary freedom had been taken with the characters of the established clergy, Mr. Leechman thought proper to request a conference with his zealous brethren; and acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of those who were present at it, as to give a considerable check to the spirit of division spreading fast in that part of the country.

In October 1740, Mr. Leechman was elected Moderator of a meeting of the Provincial Synod at Irvine, and according to custom opened the following meeting at Glasgow with a sermon to the clergy, *on*
the

DR. LEECHMAN.

the Temper, Character, and Duty of a Minister of the Gospel. Among the very many sermons and charges published on this subject, few perhaps will bear a fair comparison with this first attempt of a young Minister, in respect of the variety of useful advices crowded into a small compass, and perhaps also the nervous language, and the striking, yet delicate manner in which these advices are given. In the beginning of 1743, he published a much longer sermon, *on Prayer*. Both these publications drew a more than ordinary attention at first, and run through a great number of editions afterwards.

In July that year, he married Mrs. Bridget Balfour, of the family of Pilrig, near Edinburgh; a young lady very worthy of his choice, qualified by the sedate, amiable, and generous turn of her mind, to value and enjoy the advantages and endearments of his friendship, which she did to the last day of his life; and qualified also, by the great propriety of her conduct, and the easy elegance of her manners, to do honour to herself and her husband in the superior

stations in which they were destined afterwards to appear.

Soon after his marriage, he was waited on by two gentlemen from Ireland, deputed by a respectable dissenting congregation in Belfast, to invite him to be their Minister, and to offer him a better salary than he enjoyed at Beith. This offer Dr. Hutcheson advised him to accept; but Professor Dunlop, and his other friends at Glasgow, joined by Mrs. Leechman's relations at Edinburgh, persuaded him to decline. Mr. Dunlop always wished to get him into the College, and it was not long before he had an opportunity; for in the end of that year the Theological Chair became vacant. The election was in the hands of the Faculty; that is, the Court of ordinary Professors, who, in some former important questions, had been accustomed to divide into two nearly equal parties. In the one party, Mr. Craig, then a Minister in the city, had some, who preferred him to all others; but he, from modesty, friendship, and a regard to the interests

interests of religion, refused to interfere at all; so that this party soon united in favour of Mr. Leechman. The other party pitched upon Mr. John Maclaurin*, one of the Ministers of Glasgow; a candidate highly respectable for his learning and piety, and well qualified for the station, had he had the *same aptness to teach* with his rival. The people of the city and neighbourhood interested themselves warmly in the fate of this election; as it was indeed an event of no small consequence to the future education of their clergy. They befriended the one or the other candidate, according to their acquaintance with him, and their opinion of the conformity of his religious sentiments to their own. Mr. Leechman had the good wishes of all the hearers of his friend Craig, who considered themselves as the people of taste and education†; and Mr. Maclaurin the good wishes of a much larger body, even all the rest of the town.

* Brother to the celebrated Professor at Edinburgh.

† Dr. Craig's Life, Biographia Britannica, new edition, vol. iv. p. 415.

On the day fixed for the decision of this matter, the votes of the Members of the faculty were equally divided, and Mr. Leechman obtained the Divinity Chair by the casting vote of the then Lord Rector, George Bogle, Esq. of Daldowie, a worthy gentleman in the neighbourhood, who till the end of his life felt much satisfaction in what he had done that day.

Against this election, the disappointed party made a formal protest; not with a view to overturn it before the Court of Session, for it was strictly legal, but in the hope of frustrating the effect of it, by the assistance of the ecclesiastical courts of Scotland. Living in habits of intimacy with a few clergymen in that neighbourhood, they flattered themselves that their influence over the whole body was greater than they found it to be. Accordingly, when Dr. Hutcheson, and Dr. Hamilton Professor of anatomy, appeared, January 3, 1744, at the first meeting of the Presbytery of Irvine, under whose jurisdiction Mr. Leechman and his parish were, and laid before
that

that Presbytery the minute of his election, requesting them to take the proper steps in consequence of it; another Professor, of the opposite party, vested with a commission from the minority, made his appearance likewise, and attempted to stop any procedure, under the pretext of a controverted election. But the court found that this gentleman had no title to appear, having neither a proper commission from the college, nor the parish, the only parties concerned. They agreed therefore to loose Mr. Leechman from his parochial connexion, and gave him up to the college, with an ample and honourable testimony of their approbation of his abilities, doctrine, and life, during the time he had lived among them,

But the very next day he experienced a different treatment, when, with the deputies of the college, he presented himself before the Presbytery of Glasgow. They refused to enroll him as a member of their court, and to allow him to take the steps the law had appointed previous to his teaching. This obliged him to protest and

complain of their conduct to the Synod; after which he began, and continued to teach in the college during the remaining part of the session.

At their meeting in February, the majority* of that Presbytery, under the direction of a zealous country clergyman†, took a very violent step, with a view to eject the new Professor. They resolved to commence a process of *heresy* against him. Whatever their motives might be, the attempt itself had the most direct tendency imaginable to hurt his reputation and usefulness, and to bring him under a general odium. A prosecution of this kind had been carried on, about sixteen years before, against a very learned Professor‡ in the same chair, and had ended, in his suspension from public teaching. To pave the way for the present process, the Presbytery appointed a numerous committee to examine Mr. Leechman's sermon on Prayer, lately published. This committee, after

* Mr. Craig, and a few more who joined him, made a very small minority.

† Mr. James Robe, Minister of Kilsyth.

‡ Mr. John Simson.

various meetings and much deliberation, produced a *paper of remarks*, as they called it, consisting of eight articles of what they deemed *heretical omissions*. The purport of the whole went to charge Mr. Leechman, with having laid too little stress on the merit of the satisfaction and intercession of our blessed Saviour, as the sole ground of our acceptance with God in prayer; and with teaching Christians to look for pardon and acceptance upon other grounds than this, which, they insinuated, Mr. L—— considered as a circumstance superfluous or foreign to prayer. To each of their remarks, or objections, the Professor gave in written answers, vindicating himself, and pointing out the mistakes of the committee in a modest, yet sufficiently spirited manner*.

But

* He complained of the injustice done him by their insinuating, or suspecting, that he had little regard to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, when he had expressed his regard to them in that very sermon in the most solemn manner imaginable, even in an address to the heart-searching and righteous Judge of all the earth; when he had preached before thousands in the town of Glasgow on these very subjects; and every time he prayed he did it in the name of Jesus Christ, of which there were as many witnesses, as there were persons who had ever heard him

But these answers, as might be expected, were neither satisfactory to the committee, nor to the Presbytery, under whose authority they acted.

The sermon itself, which bore on the face of it strong marks of a devout heart, as well as of a highly cultivated understanding, had been much read and admired.

pray, either in public or private. He shewed that the committee had not adverted to the main design of the sermon, though sufficiently marked in it; which was, not to give a complete account of prayer, but to remove prejudices against it: prejudices that had been cherished by the publication of a late pamphlet, written by one Cummin, a Quaker; which had endeavoured to represent devotion as an absurd, nay, as an impious and blasphemous practice. He asked his accusers, If there was any precept of divine revelation, any dictate of reason, any act of the general assembly, forbidding us to make application to such persons for their reformation, and to reason with them on such principles as are owned by them, and just in themselves? Must not men be first reconciled to prayer itself, and convinced that it is a reasonable thing, before they can be reconciled to praying in the name of Christ? &c. &c. He told them, that he was conscious he had composed the sermon with a good intention: that he had particular occasion to know that it had been really useful, by the divine blessing, to reconcile some prejudiced persons to the *theory*, and he hoped also to the *practice*, of prayer: that he was possessed of an inward satisfaction, which the whole world could not rob him of: and after all the clamour that had been raised, he did not repent of the publication, &c. &c.

In

In the space of a few months it had undergone a second edition. And this unexpected attack on the author, visibly calculated to raise a spirit of bigotry in the common people against him, soon roused the attention and indignation of many of the conscientious friends of religion and learning in that quarter, to whom Mr. Leechman was not personally known. It drew together a great number of the clergy from the most distant corners of that large Synod, together with several gentlemen of rank, who took their seats with them as elders, which they had not done for many years before. The Court assembled at Glasgow in the beginning of April, and, in consequence of Mr. Leechman's *complaint*, thought proper to call for the *papers*, and to take the business entirely out of the hands of the inferior court, who shewed great reluctance to part with it; having resolved to continue their sittings, and to hang up the cause for some time to the public view. The Synod appointed a particular diet to judge and decide it: in which the *remarks*, *answers*, and every thing referred to in both, were read, and
read

read a second time article by article. Every member was allowed to propose what further objections occurred to him, and the Professor allowed to answer him, if he could, *viva voce*; which was done in several instances. On the whole, the Synod almost unanimously found "Professor Leechman's answers to the remarks or objections made by the committee of the Presbytery of Glasgow, to be fully satisfying, and sufficient to remove any offence conceived; and found no reason to charge the said Professor with any unsoundness in the faith, expressed in the passages of the sermon complained of." The Professor thanked "the reverend and honourable Members of the Court for the time and pains they had bestowed in doing justice to his character; hoping that, through the help of God, he should, in the future exercise of his office, justify the favourable opinion they seemed to have formed of him*."

The Presbytery had at the beginning made an appeal to the General Assembly,

* Synod records.

That

That Court, when the cause came before them, wisely referred it to a select committee, and adopted their judgment without a vote. They found, "That the Synod of Glasgow and Air had sufficient reason to take into their own hands the cognizance of the enquiry touching the sermon." They confirmed the judgment passed by that Synod, and "prohibited the Presbytery of Glasgow to commence, or carry on any further or other proceedings against the Professor, on account of that sermon."

Mr. Leechman being now at full liberty to exert his talents on a public theatre, his character, both as a preacher and a professor, shone out the brighter, after this cloud was dissipated. No further attempts were made to darken his reputation, and to disturb him in the exercise of his duty. Some of those who had appeared his keen adversaries in the church process, lived with him afterwards on terms of sincere friendship:

ship: even the prejudices of the common people in Glasgow gradually subsided; so that he came to be considered there, as he had always been in every other place, a very acceptable preacher.

But his time was chiefly employed, at the beginning, in preparing lectures for the divinity hall. Dr. Hutcheson, who spoke Latin with more fluency and elegance than most men, was the first who introduced the custom of lecturing in *English* into that university. Mr. Leechman followed his example: and though his great modesty prevented him from ever attaining to the easy and spirited manner of that celebrated Professor, who lectured, to appearance, *extempore*, walked up and down in his class-room, and spoke with an animation of countenance, voice, and gesture, which instantly went to the heart; though Mr. Leechman made an almost constant use of his papers, under the disadvantage of being very near-sighted; yet his Lectures were also judicious, liberal, sometimes uncommonly striking, and equally relished by

by the great multitude of students who attended them.

The Writer of this narrative had an opportunity of attending these Lectures six years * without any interruption, a circumstance which he has ever considered as one of the happiest events of his life. He will now attempt to describe the method of teaching theology then pursued, as a very memorable and useful part of the life of his much-esteemed master. The Professor gave a lecture of a full hour's length regularly four days every week, during a six months session; and besides this, spent an hour on Friday, and sometimes another on Saturday, in hearing the discourses composed by the students on particular texts or portions of Scripture prescribed to them. After these were delivered, he made his *observations* on each of them in a manner that showed the most accurate attention; commending with judgment, or censuring with delicacy. When a stronger censure was requisite, it was reserved to a private conference with the student.

* From the year 1747 to the year 1753.

On Monday the Professor gave a Critical Lecture on the New Testament, reading the passage in the original language, adverting, when it was necessary, to the different senses put upon the Greek words by the commentators, without naming them ;—to the connexion ;—to the particular probable views of the writer or speaker, and the situation of the minds of the hearers ;—to any ancient customs or historical facts necessary to illustrate the passage. Thus he exhibited the precise sense of it, answered at the same time the principal objections, and intermixed occasionally short pertinent observations. As this lecture was of the first importance to the students, so to the Professor it seemed to be the easiest part of his work ; for he had been accustomed to something like it while he was a Minister. The forenoon's exercise in all the pulpits of Scotland is of a similar kind, though managed there in a more easy and popular way.

The diets on Tuesday, Thursday, and sometimes Friday, were spent, on what is called Polemical Divinity. Consider-
ing

ing how little this teacher had of the spirit of a polemic, his accurate knowledge of all the principal controversies which have agitated the Christian world was surprising; and the judgment and candour with which he conducted this delicate and dangerous part of his business was pleasing, at least to every liberal mind. The Writer of this Life was then too young to be a proper judge of these things; but since that time he has often reflected upon it with wonder and pleasure. The text-book the Professor used was Pictet's Shorter System, afterward changed for Ostervald. These authors were chiefly useful to him in their arrangement of the subject. Their track the Professor followed through the barren heaths, as well as the more pleasant and fruitful parts of this wide field. Over the former he flew quick, scarcely touching the ground; over the latter he walked slow, pointing out to his young friends almost every thing agreeable and useful observed by former travellers, and frequently himself strewing flowers and fruits on the road. In plain words, he touched slightly the scholastic use-

less

less questions, marking them as historical facts, with the circumstances or events that gave rise to them; and dwelt with satisfaction on such points, as the perfections, the providence and moral government of God, the authenticity and divine authority of the Scriptures, &c. &c. &c. confirming and improving the sentiments of his authors by his own striking observations. In the course of two sessions he went over the whole system.

The principal thing aimed at, however, in these lectures, was to give his theological students a view of the great controversies which have divided Christians. To each of these he introduced himself from something he found in his text: and laying aside his book, he treated the subject in the following manner, in two or more lectures, according to the importance or celebrity of the question. He began with a history of the controversy, and of the chief men who figured in it. He stated the point in dispute with sufficient precision; not only the opposite opinions of the two parties, but the difference of
opinion

opinion in the men of the same party. Then, which was the main thing, he gave a candid view of the arguments on both sides, from reason, and especially from Scripture. Here his sound judgment led him to put aside every thing trivial, and to bring forth the very strength of the arguments, as well as of the difficulties, on each side; particularly, the most plausible passages of Scripture urged in proof of the opposite opinions,—the criticisms by which the force of these texts was supported or evaded,—with the answers, replies, and duplies made by the parties in the course of the debate. In fine, justice was done to both parties, not only in this representation of their opinions, with the grounds of them, but also by admitting their disavowal of the absurd and dangerous consequences charged on each by their antagonists, and exhibiting the important points of christianity mutually acknowledged by both.

After all, the question remained undecided: that is, the hearers were left entirely to the exercise of their own judgment, and directed to the means of further enquiry.

No dictatorial opinion, no infallible or decisive judgment on any great controverted point, was ever delivered from that theological chair. After the point had undergone a full discussion, none of the students yet knew the particular opinion of this venerable Professor, in any other way than by the superior weight of the arguments which he had brought under their view: so delicately scrupulous was he to throw any bias at all upon ingenuous minds, in their enquiry after Sacred Truth. In this he certainly acted right; for such was the reverence which the great body of his scholars felt for *his* superior judgment, that, had they known it in particular points, it would have had too much weight in determining *theirs*.

As if this had not been enough, when he gave the students his parting advices at the end of the session, he warmly recommended candour and continued diligence in the search after truth; modesty and caution in forming their last judgments on points about which wise and good men had thought differently; advised them long
to

to retain the character of enquirers, and to keep their minds open to new light and evidence from every quarter. He shewed how wise and how lovely this was in all, especially in young minds; and painted, on the other hand, in strong colours, the indecency of rash presumptuous judgments, and the fatal effects of bigotry.

On the Wednesdays he delivered, during the course of one year, Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity; and next year, Lectures on Composition, *viz.* that of sermons. As his own modesty resisted the pressing solicitations of his friends, to publish either the whole or any part of these Lectures; so the Writer of these Memoirs will, he hopes, be forgiven, for attempting to give the world a slight view of what appeared to be most original, at least in the first set of them; even though it should swell these Memoirs to a greater size than was at first intended.

After a short historical account of the principal opposers and defenders of Christianity, especially during the first four centuries;

turies; after exhibiting Christianity as a chain of past, present, and future facts; and marking, in the spirit of Bishop Butler, the presumptive evidence in its favour, arising from a general view of the scheme itself: he divided his subject into two great branches: I. *The internal evidence of Christianity, resulting from the perfection of the moral doctrine and character of its Author.* II. *The more direct or external evidence arising from miracles, and the accomplishment of prophecies.* Of the Lectures on this last branch I shall say nothing farther, than that they contained an accurate and striking view of the substance of many volumes that have been written on it; but I shall give a very general account of the course of lectures on the first branch, which comprehended about the half of the whole, because there seems to have been something more new, or peculiar at least, in the manner of treating the subject*.

He

* Traces of the same train of thought and argument are to be met with in Dr. Duchal's Sermons, and Dr. Macnight's book on the Evidences of Christianity, both published long after these Lectures were first composed. Even similar

He gave a short regular view, from the Evangelists, of the moral truths and precepts delivered by Jesus Christ; together with the motives by which he recommended or enforced that high standard of moral excellence, he set before his followers; and challenged the adversaries of Christianity to produce any thing equal to this doctrine. He answered, at considerable length, the principal objections that have been made to the Christian morality*, and closed this part of the subject with some excellent observations on the manner of our Saviour's teaching; such as, that our great Instructor taught religion in the way best suited to the condition of mankind; not as founded on *reasoning*, but upon *testimony*;—that he mixed the truths or facts of religion and the practice of it together;—that he waved every thing *curious*, and delivered nothing but what was highly *useful* to mankind;—that the knowledge of

similar views seem to have struck the sceptical but feeling mind of Rousseau, from a very slight knowledge of the Scriptures, and to have made him at times, almost a Christian.

* See this done in a very spirited manner in Dr. Beattie's late book on the Evidences of Christianity, Vol. II. page 105, &c.

Jesus Christ, great as it was, had all the appearance of being to him intuitive or self-evident ; that it was not attended with any the least doubtfulness, or suspicion of uncertainty ;—that the discourses of Jesus Christ contain the sublimest sentiments imaginable, expressed with a perfect ease and simplicity, and were delivered with an air of uncommon dignity and authority, which struck the hearers.

The Professor next proceeded to the second and principal branch of the argument, which he considered as essential to the evidence of Christianity, *viz. the purity and perfection of the moral character of Jesus Christ*. This was subdivided into two branches ; his *virtue*, and his *wisdom*. He delineated at great length our Saviour's piety, as the leading stroke of his character ; characterised his devotion as chiefly secret or retired ;—joyful, in opposition to the gloomy cast of superstition ;—calm and rational, in opposition to the mechanical fervours and irregular transports of enthusiasm : marked his habitual regard to the will of God as the leading principle of his

his whole conduct; and shewed this to be a principle of action superior in its influence to any other. *2dly*, He delineated at proper length our Lord's charity, or love to mankind. That besides the common feelings of humanity, he had a more divine compassion than the rest of mankind, flowing from his clear discernment of their spiritual miseries. He characterised our Lord's benevolence as pure or disinterested, universal, or unlimited by the natural, political, and religious distinctions which take place among men; and as steady or unconquerable by any kind of injury or provocation. He marked our Lord's *humility*, or stooping to the lowest offices in the service of mankind, as a branch of his goodness, distinguished from his *modesty*, in referring the glory of every thing he did to his father, which was considered as a branch of his piety. *3dly*, The Professor delineated the sincerity or integrity of Jesus Christ as of prime importance in the argument, leading us at once to the presumption of the truth of his mission, and shewed he was really possessed of this virtue, from

various facts or appearances, particularly the appearance of a perfect superiority to the motives of worldly interest and ambition, and every other motive that could make him swerve from the truth. *Lastly*, He delineated the fortitude of Jesus Christ, displayed through the whole course of his public life, in standing up single and alone in the cause of truth and righteousness, persisting in a noble opposition to the hypocrisy, bigotry, and wickedness of almost all the men of learning and rank in his own nation; and this, with the prospect of his last sufferings and ignominious execution full before him.

After answering some objections to the moral character of Jesus Christ, particularly from the apparent severity of his language to these men, and his treatment of them; the Professor proceeded to exhibit our Saviour's *wisdom*, or address, in employing the best and fittest means to gain the great end he had in view, even the instruction and reformation of mankind, and this in a variety of particulars, from the History of the Evangelists: such as, his turning every
common

common and uncommon incident into the channel of instruction; the remarkable answers he gave to the curious, and to the captious or ensnaring questions, put to him; his singular manner of insinuating instruction into the minds of his hearers, by parables, or familiar little stories*; his manner of correcting the errors and vices of mankind; and his admirable manner of training up his apostles for the difficult and important service for which he designed them.

To this he added some observations on the moral character of Jesus Christ: that he was distinguished from all the rest of the sons of men, by practising the whole train of moral and divine virtues with invariable uniformity and constancy:—that in him the seemingly opposite virtues were united; such as, an unshaken firmness, with the greatest tenderness of disposition that can well be imagined; a certain air of dignity, with the most amiable humility; an admirable prudence, with the most perfect

* See this part of the Evidence of Christianity displayed in a very masterly manner in Mr. Bourn's two volumes of Lectures on our Saviour's Parables.

sincerity,

sincerity, &c.; and that he practised the hardest parts of virtue, without any effort—with the utmost ease, and with the simplicity, as it were, of a little child.

He next proceeded to prove, that there really did exist in the world such a character as that of Jesus Christ; since for this, we have not only the common evidence of history, but a history of a singular kind; that the character is there exhibited only by a train of facts of which the historians were eye-witnesses, or had full information. These naked facts they relate, without making any observations upon them; without clothing them with any embellishments. They relate, at the same time, their own infirmities and faults, and those of their friends, without any reserve. They make no encomiums on their own master, nor throw out any bitter reflections on his enemies. And it is scarcely possible to conceive, that these illiterate men could have produced such a piece of moral painting as this from their own imaginations—could have imagined a train of actions, and of sublime discourses, which exhibit to every attentive

attentive person such a character as that of Jesus Christ, except they had seen and heard them, or copied them from real life.

He then began to draw the conclusion, that if there really appeared in the world, about 1700 years ago, a person of such virtue and integrity, and such uncommon wisdom as Jesus Christ, we ought surely to pay some regard to his testimony; and if we reject it, we must do it on one or other of these suppositions,—either that he was an impostor, and intended to deceive the world,—or that he was an enthusiast, who imposed upon himself. From a review of the life of Jesus Christ, the Professor showed, that neither of these suppositions could be admitted by any unprejudiced person; that our Saviour could not be a gross impostor, nor even a public-spirited impostor, a Philosopher who, having discovered the common errors of mankind, and the true road to happiness, attempted to impose his own discoveries upon others as a revelation from God, in order to give them the greater weight with mankind, like some of the ancient Legislators: such dissingenuity being perfectly inconsistent with

with the whole tenor of his conduct in life and at death. Neither has the character of Jesus Christ one single feature of the enthusiast,—heat of imagination and temper,—melancholy, and an unsocial spirit,—extatic devotion,—ignorance,—credulity,—vanity, or self-conceit. And having no appearance either of the impostor or enthusiast, his character could not be made up of a mixture of both.

He then returned to urge the foregoing plain delineation of the moral doctrine and character of Jesus Christ as a strong presumptive evidence of the reality of his divine mission, even independent of the miracles wrought, and the predictions uttered by himself and his apostles, and the connected train of ancient prophecy fulfilled, which are the obvious and direct proofs of it. That if a person really appeared in the world who performed the actions, spoke the discourses, and suffered the death, ascribed to Jesus Christ; it lies on the adversaries of Christianity to give some satisfying, at least some plausible, account of this phenomenon; which they have never yet attempted

tempted to do : for mere general declamation about the superstition and credulity of mankind, and their liableness to imposture and enthusiasm, cannot overturn the evidence of plain facts. Here is a person of pure virtue, of consummate wisdom, of undaunted resolution, in the best of causes,—a person who appeared quite superior to all worldly views and interests; who discovered on all occasions the greatest calmness of mind imaginable, the greatest soundness of judgment, the most inviolable integrity, who never betrayed the least symptom of a disordered imagination, or of undisciplined passions; but pure reason, an immovable regard to truth, to virtue, and to the good of mankind, appeared to be the governing principles of his conduct:—this person asserts, in the most solemn manner that can be conceived, insists upon it steadily through his whole life, dying, rather than renounce it, that *he came from God*, that he was commissioned by his Father to instruct, to reform, to save mankind, and that power and authority were lodged in his hands for these purposes.—Is there

there no regard at all due to the testimony of such a person? Will his claims be entirely overlooked, or contemptuously disregarded, by any serious, any wise and good man?

To illustrate and ascertain the force of this part of the argument, the Professor figured to himself and to his students how such a person as Socrates would have reasoned concerning Jesus Christ, had he been so happy as to have seen and heard him. The Professor went into a long and beautiful detail upon this, representing the manner in which, we may easily suppose that philosopher, who bewailed his own ignorance, and earnestly desired heavenly instruction in the important matters of duty, would have been struck, had he heard the sublime discourses and precepts of religion delivered from the mouth of Jesus Christ, and seen him exemplify them in their full perfection and purity: and how he would have argued, from the *visible* character and conduct of our Saviour as a teacher of religion, to the *invisible* character and divine authority he laid claim to.

This

This branch of the subject was concluded with a very natural and proper enquiry into the causes, why the character of Jesus Christ is so little regarded as it is in the world. 1. One part of mankind have their moral taste impaired or extinguished by sensual pursuits ; another part of them are accustomed chiefly to admire different kinds of inferior excellence, and to overlook the highest kind. Some are dazzled with the outward glare of wealth and external rank ; others admire the political wisdom of the founders and governors of states ; others are struck with the force of great genius, and admirable inventions in the sciences and arts ; to others nothing appears so excellent as the power of eloquence, which commands the minds of men ; others admire military courage, and the glory of the conquerors of the earth. Among all these, few are to be found who are struck with the glory of a perfect moral character, uniformly supported under every circumstance of disgrace and distress ; though this be more singular and extraordinary than any of the former, and much more admirable.

But,

But, to relish this properly, a certain degree of purity of heart is necessary. Jesus, though he pretended to no eloquence, though he published no inventions, though he conquered no kingdoms, though he was stript of all the glare of worldly grandeur and magnificence, was yet great in his own greatness, in his own matchless goodness and worth, which, whether it be or be not admired by men, shines, with real and everlasting glory, in the sight of God.

2. Another cause of inattention to the excellence of the character of Christ, is the want of a sufficient degree of spiritual discernment, even in those who are not void of all taste for true worth.

3. The want of taste for the true simplicity of writing, to be found in the naked relations of the honest unlearned Evangelists, and a kind of juvenile taste for ornament.

Lastly, The minds of men have been drawn away from attending to the character of Jesus Christ, by their too close attention to metaphysical systems of religion, and their too violent zeal for the distinguishing

tinguishing tenets of parties. Disputes about these have divided the friends of Christianity, and given its enemies occasion to triumph. Had the last taken their views of Christianity from its original records, and particularly from the discourses and life of Jesus Christ, they would have found little to say against it; they would have found it difficult to render their writings plausible, even to a superficial understanding*.

In place of the Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity, Dr. Leechman delivered every second year his Lectures *on the Composition of Sermons*. To give a stranger a proper idea of these may lead to too great a detail. Some of the best rules of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and other ancient rhetoricians, in as far as they could be adapted to this species of oratory,

* See the sentiments of this last Lecture detailed at greater length than is here attempted, and perhaps with more dignity and energy, by Dr. Macgill, in his valuable practical Essay on the Death of Christ, page 184—187. He there takes occasion, in a note, to pay a commendable tribute of gratitude and respect to the memory of Dr. Leechman, and to mark, by a few masterly strokes, his distinguishing character as a theological teacher.

together with many others drawn from experience or practice, were brought under the view of the students, in such a manner, as could scarce fail to correct the most common errors young people are apt to fall into, and to direct and assist the efforts of their own genius, in what was to be their principal employment through life.

After a general Lecture on the definition and divisions which the ancients have given of oratory, and marking how far these are applicable to pulpit discourses, he proposed to consider,

I. The more material or essential parts of the discourse.

II. The more circumstantial parts of it, the dress and ornaments, the language and composition. And,

III. The complexion and temper of mind, with which discourses designed for the instruction of mankind ought both to be composed and delivered.

I. He began the first head with laying down some rules for the choice of a subject :
that

that it be such a one as the preacher fully understood *.—That all abstruse and metaphysical subjects were to be avoided, and all the abstract and disputed points of speculative theology; that plain and useful subjects were to be chosen, and that to discourse on these in a plain and affecting manner, discovered more genius and judgment than appeared in metaphysical disquisitions.—That the discourses of a preacher of the Gospel ought to be *Christian*, or have some relation to that great Master whose name he bears; that to preach any part of the religion of Jesus Christ is to preach Christ.—That a plain text of Scripture ought to be chosen, which would easily and naturally exhibit the subject, and exhibit it in the same point of view in which we intend to consider it.

After this, he enquired what was the proper design of an Introduction; explained at considerable length, and applied to pulpit oratory, the admirable rules or cautions

* Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam
Viribus; et versate diu, quid ferre recusent
Quid valeant humeri.

Hox.

laid down by Cicero* about the Exordium, and added one or two more. Then, agreeably to the three great ends of public speaking proposed by the ancient Rhetoricians, he divided the principal part, or matter of the discourse, into three branches, which he did not, however, mean should be all introduced and kept distinct in every discourse. It might be complete if it consisted of two, or even of one of them.

1. The information of the understanding by the Explication of the subject.

2. The conviction of the judgment by the Reasoning or Argumentative part of the Discourse. And,

3. The moving the Passions or Affections.

1. The first he shewed to be a matter of great importance, and advised his pupils to look into the context, in order to be acquainted with the subject, in the same point of view in which it stood in the sacred writings. He divided subjects into *simple* and *complex*. Some were so very simple and clear, as not to need any explication; others might need some definition or

* In his book *De Inventione*.

descrip-

description. The subject might be distinguished from any thing that had a *natural* connexion with it; for instance, meekness from forgiveness: or it might be distinguished from any thing that had an *artificial* connexion with it, in consequence of the association of ideas, the prejudices and passions of men. Examples of this were given, in the distinction between a rational fear of God, and a dark superstitious fear; between indignation against vice, and a zeal for our own tenets; between ambition, and the love of fame; emulation, and envy; humility, and meanness of spirit. A subject thus distinguished might be illustrated in different ways; by an apt similitude representing it to the imagination; by comparing it with something, clearer than itself, which it resembles; by contrast; especially by exhibiting it as it appears in real life, in men of different characters, or in different circumstances and situations.

In the division of complex subjects, he directed us scrupulously to follow the order of nature, and showed the great importance of this. He concluded with point-

ing out the necessity of a general and particular knowledge of the subject, and of possessing a sincere desire to instruct; and warmly recommending these, as the best means of succeeding in this branch of composition.

2. The second branch, *viz.* the Reasoning part of the discourse, he distinguished from the *first*, and especially from the *last*; shewing, by a variety of examples, that the considerations suited to convince the judgment, and to move the affections, are quite distinct or different in their own nature, though very often confounded together, both in printed and written sermons, under one general head of *Motives*. He mentioned *some* subjects which do not admit of reasoning, such as the drawing of characters, and very evident truths, which needed, however, to be placed in a striking light, in order to revive and strengthen the impressions of them. But in *the most part* of subjects, this is an important branch. His rules were such as these: that the arguments be adapted to the subject as explained, and if a complex subject,

ject, adapted to the different parts of it;—that they should be proposed in their natural order;—that the plainest and strongest ought to be selected; and if any others are admitted, they ought not to occupy a principal station in the discourse, ought not to appear either in the first or last place, and no more should be employed than were sufficient to produce the intended effect; few reasoners knowing when to stop.

He distinguished here between *conviction* and *persuasion*. The first consisted merely in placing before the mind such arguments as would extort its assent. The last included also the employing all honest methods of rendering the subject agreeable to the hearers. He shewed the importance of this on moral and religious subjects. He touched upon some things which enter into the art of persuasion; such as, an agreeable voice; a proper pronunciation and gesture; the beautifying, enlivening, and enforcing the reasoning by chaste strokes of fancy, especially by insinuating addresses to the hearers; by discovering a tender concern for their best interests; by avoiding any strokes

of raillery, any pride or contempt of their opinions, how ridiculous soever they might be; by an habitual attention to their notions and views of things; by making proper allowances for their prejudices, and by entering into them with a kind of sympathy.

3. The third and last essential division of public speaking which he considered, was, the means of moving the heart, which he said might be taken either in a larger sense, for raising in the mind a calm esteem of any virtue, branch of science, or other valuable accomplishment; or, in a stricter sense, for raising the passions and affections of love, gratitude, joy, grief, hope, fear, pity, indignation, hatred; and thus bringing the principles or springs of human action into immediate exercise. His directions on this head were such as these: that the preacher should consider whether his subject admitted of passion or warmth;—that he should set before the minds of his hearers the *motives* or considerations naturally suited to raise the particular passion or affection of heart he intended to raise;—
and

and that no passion was to be raised in any other way, than by its own peculiar motives. He distinguished between painting to the imagination, and moving the heart. The last might be often most successfully done in the simplest language possible. He shewed, however, the power of a warm or of a vigorous imagination in heightening the passions, by placing the motives directly suited to raise them in a stronger light than they would have otherwise appeared to the mind. On the other hand, he marked the danger, the great danger, of too much imagery, and even of interweaving any thing foreign with the immediate motives, any thing which has not a direct tendency to excite or heighten the feeling intended to be raised. He insisted, with Horace, that the speaker should be first moved himself before he can move others, and that his feelings all along should correspond with theirs; that *he* ought to begin modestly, when *they* are calm, and rise gradually into all the ardour of eloquence.

He

He represented the raising proper religious affections and feelings, as the most agreeable part of a preacher's duty, the exercise of most of them being highly pleasing; and that the more of this emotion animated a discourse, the more interesting it would be, if not also the more improving. At the same time, he represented the raising the passions as a work of great difficulty and delicacy. He accounted for the success of some, who had no great art or talents for oratory, and yet seemed able to raise and lead the passions of their hearers at their pleasure. It was easy to strike in with reigning prejudices, but exceedingly difficult to correct them; it was easy to gratify a prevailing humour; to heighten passions already too strong, which needed to be lowered; to flatter men's vanity and self-love, as if *their* religious tenets were the only right ones, and to lead them to despise and hate others; but it was not so easy to raise in their hearts a supreme love of God and mankind, the love of truth, equity, virtue,
and

and other feelings which would lead them *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.* Here he took occasion to show, that it was often a preacher's duty to *allay* a passion, to control and change it from an improper to a proper object; and he suggested the general topics or means of doing it.

After this he considered the *Conclusion* of a discourse, which ought to be different, according to the subject handled in it. If the chief design of the discourse had been to illustrate or prove some religious truth, the most natural conclusion seems to be *Corollaries* or *Inferences*. These, however, are generally best placed in that part of the discourse where the truth of them will best appear, or the force of them be most felt. If the principal design has been to show the excellence or importance of some virtue, or to raise some particular affection; then the conclusion ought to be a *Recapitulation* of the principal arguments, or of the principal motives, collected in one strong point of view, and urged with the whole accumulated weight. He considered
what

what is called an *Application*, as one of the properest conclusions in many cases, *viz.* the adapting the general topics insisted on in the discourse, in a warm and masterly manner, to the particular characters and situations of the different hearers.

His rules and observations on every branch of this extensive subject were illustrated by a rich variety of pertinent examples, chiefly original *, which not only gave a perfectly clear idea of the fault he meant to correct, or the practice he meant to inculcate, but also furnished excellent hints for composing sermons on the particular subjects of religion from which the example was drawn.

He concluded this first head with suggesting the General Preparation necessary for succeeding in the work of composition: *viz.* the laying in a proper stock of knowledge and materials in our own minds: and acquiring the ability of making the best use of our materials, of arranging and applying them in such a manner as best to an-

* *i. e.* drawn from his own compositions.

fewer one or more of the three principal ends of public speaking which we have in view. For both these purposes, he recommended deep Meditation on every one of the great subjects of religion; the reading of those books which contain the greatest variety of rich materials; above all, the holy scriptures, which contain a greater variety of moral sentiments than any other book in the world, passages of which may be introduced, not only in the way of proof and illustration, but of embellishment to a discourse:—The reading also the best books of the ancient moralists:—the knowledge of logic; of the human understanding, and the best methods of reaching it by the power of conviction and persuasion:—the knowledge of the human heart; its various passions; the original intentions of the Author of Nature in them; their most common deviations from their right objects, and the most successful methods of bringing them back. Especially the knowledge of the world or of real life, which would teach us the different springs or principles from which men act, the workings

ings of self-deceit—the windings of the human heart: thus we should be able to paint manners, and delineate to the conviction of our hearers their own real characters. Our Saviour himself, in his discourses and parables, has exhibited very striking pictures of the living manners of mankind.

This first head, of which I have given an imperfect sketch, comprehended above two thirds of the whole Lectures.

II. The second head was short, concerning the language and ornaments of the discourse. Of his Lectures on this exhausted subject, I shall only mention the rules or directions he gave for forming a right style. 1. Close thought* on the subject. 2. That we should learn, in writing or composing, to stick scrupulously to nature; to describe and paint things just as they are in themselves: without this, there can be no true eloquence. 3. That we should learn to correct our inward man; a florid imagination, a false taste for happiness, a

* *Scribendi recte, sapere est et principium et fons:*
Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequentur. Hor.

low desire of applause. Without this, he said, our compositions could never have that gravity, seriousness, and earnestness of manner, which they ought to have.

4. That we should accustom ourselves to frequent composition, which would soon render it easy and pleasant; for no exercise could be more pleasant than to bring forth truth, and clothe it in proper language.

5. After we have read and meditated on a subject, we should accustom ourselves to yield *ourselves up* to the force of our own genius, without borrowing or transcribing from the writings of others. Here the pleasure of being *originals* was strongly inculcated, as well as the utility of it. It would abridge one half of the labour of our lives.

6. That we ought generally to follow, in our style, the natural bent of our genius; and, in some cases, to endeavour to assist and strengthen nature.

7. That we should be at very great pains to accommodate our style to the capacities of our hearers, and to avoid the absurdity of speaking in a learned or philosophical style before a common audience.

dience. And lastly, That our style should be accommodated to the different subjects we speak upon, and even to the different parts of the same subject.

III. His third and last general head was, The complexion, and temper of mind, with which discourses intended for the instruction of mankind ought to be both composed and delivered. With respect to the first of these, I shall only mention the few advices he gave at the beginning, without attempting to abridge the many excellent things he threw out, relative to the peculiar characteristical temper and behaviour becoming students of theology, as advocates for virtue and religion. He began with recommending to them a constant effort to form themselves to a certain sensibility of heart; and, as the means of improving this, he recommended a diligent perusal of the works of such writers as had the greatest power over the human mind.—Frequent contemplation on such objects as were great and interesting in their own nature.—The avoiding of every thing unfavourable to this sensibility, particularly a
too

too minute attention to metaphysical disputes in philosophy, and to party disputes in religion. 2. A strong sense of what is fit, decent, or becoming. 3. An unfeigned and hearty desire of doing good, by communicating important instruction to our hearers, which would cut off all superficial ornaments, and all vain desires of applause. This ardour to do good ought not only to exist in our minds, but to be visible in our discourses; and ought to repress all appearances of self-sufficiency and contempt of any class of our hearers; for that the meanest of mankind had a certain instinctive power of discerning these things. He suggested some fine considerations to awaken tenderness for others; that, even independent of its influence on our discourses, it was an amiable and proper temper in itself.—That it was only after a long course of study that we ourselves were able to attain to any just and accurate notions of things.—That no person remained willingly in an error.—That there was generally a mixture of truth and falsehood in the prejudices of mankind; and that the

first ought to be carefully distinguished, and fully acknowledged, which would greatly facilitate our attempts to correct the last. 4. That we ought to avoid the opposite extremes of credulity and scepticism. The first would hurt us in the judgment of the discerning part of our hearers: the last had miserable effects in deadening some of the best feelings of the mind. And, lastly, That we should endeavour to acquire a kind of authority, viz. the authority of wisdom and virtue, by preserving an entire blamelessness of manners, maintaining a certain decency and dignity of character; by a strict command over our own minds, and a constant firmness in what is right.

Besides his Lectures on the truth of Christianity, and on composition, Dr. Leechman introduced among his controversial ones several other trains of Lectures very improving to his students, particularly a set on *the Law of Moses, and the Civil and Religious Constitution of the Israelites*; exhibiting it in a just and rational light, and vindicating it from the objections

tions of the adversaries of revelation, founded on a superficial knowledge of it. Another set he gave, which I never heard, on the *Excellence of the Scriptures*, especially the writings of the Old Testament; the singular and valuable knowledge which they furnish to mankind beyond all other writings; the manner in which they enforce virtue and religion; the beauties of particular parts of them, &c. The chief design of these last lectures was to awaken the curiosity and ardour of young minds, and incite them to study thoroughly the sacred books.

DOCTOR LEECHMAN continued in the theological chair seventeen years, cutting off, from time to time, such parts of his lectures as were least valuable; enriching them with something new or more important, suggested by the train of reading in which he was engaged, or by his own fertile mind: especially vindicating and establishing the grand truths of natural

and revealed religion against the principal objections made to them by Mr. Hume, Lord Bolingbroke, Voltaire, and other sceptical writers, whose books made their first appearance during that period, and, from the literary reputation of the authors, attracted more of the public attention than they deserved. Dr. Leechman was indeed qualified, beyond most men, to be a successful teacher and defender of truth. His love of it was pure and warm: yet this generous warmth was strictly guarded by the modesty of his own mind, and never betrayed him into any harsh or indecent language towards those whose opinions he could not but consider as hostile to truth, and to the best interests of mankind. He was as free, as any man I ever knew, from bigotry, or an improper attachment to any systems of Theology or Philosophy, that of Hutcheson his beloved friend not excepted. He was, to all appearance, equally candid with the justly-admired Lardner: and though his reading or learning was considerably inferior to that prodigy of knowledge, yet it was still very extensive, especially

DR. LEECHMAN.

cially in the Historical, Moral, and Theological branches. He had perhaps more original genius, and force of mind than Lardner. He had a most remarkable talent of selecting what was most important or most striking on every subject he handled; so that his arguments were never specious, but solid; not founded on speculations, but facts; urged, at the same time, with a degree of warmth which carried the hearers along with him; for they were addressed equally to the judgment and to the heart. In fine, the exertion of these distinguished talents was stimulated and heightened by a spirit of manly devotion, which he never concealed, but gave way to on all proper occasions; and though the effects of this were transient on many, yet it left such impressions on some minds as will never be entirely effaced.

Dr. Leechman's fame and success as a Teacher was such, as might be expected from such talents and virtues. The first prejudices raised against him were soon forgotten. The Divinity Hall at Glasgow

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was crowded in his time with a greater number of scholars than any other in Scotland. His labours there contributed to increase the rising reputation of that University, and did eminent service to the Church; especially by inspiring young minds with an ardour for truth, cherishing a spirit of inquiry after it, and diffusing rational and liberal sentiments of Religion in that corner of the country. Even the young men designed for the ministry among the Seceders, who are considered as the most rigid sect in Scotland, attended Dr. Leechman's lectures in considerable numbers; and thus manifested a thirst for knowledge, and a liberality of mind, which did them much honour. Many ingenious young men from England and Ireland attended his lectures, and improved under his tuition, several of whom have since distinguished themselves both among the Dissenters and in the Church. His numerous scholars, however they might differ in their sentiments of speculative theology and church government, were all cordially united

united in their affection and veneration for their old Master, imbibed early, and retained to the last.

In the summer 1744, Mr. Leechman rode to London in company with his first pupil Mr. Geddes, then in a very declining state of health. Their stay was but short; yet Mr. Leechman was then introduced to Lardner, Benson, and other eminent men among the dissenters. His acquaintance with Dr. Price commenced afterwards, with whom he corresponded occasionally. Their mutual and very sincere friendship continued through life. After Mr. Geddes's death, Mr. Leechman revised his papers, and published in the year 1748 his *Posthumous Essay on the Composition and Manner of Writing of the Ancients, especially Plato*; a book which deserves to be better known among scholars, than I imagine it is. That young gentleman ventured to attack Warburton, then in the zenith of his glory, and to expose some of his fanciful opinions respecting Plato, by many just criticisms, mixed with a pleasant vein of good humour.

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To Mr. Leechman's advice and assistance the world are indebted for a still more valuable present—*A System of Moral Philosophy by Dr. Hutcheson*, published from his original MSS. by his son in the year 1755. To this Dr. Leechman prefixed a large account of the life, writings, and character of the author. Though the picture is drawn by the hand of a friend, and is a very beautiful one, those who were best acquainted with the *original*, know that it is not too flattering;—that it is drawn with singular modesty, simplicity, and fidelity, and no feature exaggerated beyond the life. Some time before the last publication, the University had conferred on him the degree of Doctor in Divinity.

In May 1757, Dr. Leechman was chosen Moderator of the General Assembly, and next year opened their meeting with a sermon on *The Wisdom of God in the Christian Revelation*, which was afterwards printed. It contains a greater variety of uncommon and striking observations on the subject, than are to be found in any other publication of the same size. The
advice

advices to the clergy, at the end of the sermon, are connected with the subject, and varied from the train of the Synod sermon.

Dr. Leechman was slender in his make, but had firm nerves, and a strong, clear, commanding voice. His health was on the whole good, but needed the guard of strict temperance and exercise during the summer months; and was withal, at times, so precarious as to alarm his friends. In his youth he was thought to be in the last stage of a consumption, and recovered beyond expectation. At Glasgow, he was subject to frequent coughs, which did not however prevent him from studying hard, and teaching constantly; till about the beginning of the year 1759, when his cough encreased, accompanied with hectic fits. This ended in his spitting up an imposthume from his breast. During this illness he taught as long as he was able, in the public hall, and afterwards in a large room in his own house, till he was forced to stop in the middle of a Lecture: yet he still continued to meet with his students and

to

to hear their discourses, after he was unable to speak to them longer, than a few minutes himself.

In the beginning of that summer his physicians sent him to Bristol. Mrs. Leechman and he set out in the view of going by London, with many introductory letters; but he grew so ill on the road, that it was thought necessary to go to Bristol without delay. He received great benefit from the use of the waters, living, during the summer and harvest months, at the village of Clifton-hill, where they met with much civility and attention from several gentlemen and clergymen in that neighbourhood. When the time of the College Session approached, they returned by Blenheim, Cirencester, &c, and spent some days at Oxford; but unfortunately saw few of the illustrious men of learning there, as it was then the time of vacation; and his state of health not yet permitting him to visit his friends in London, he determined to go home by the West road. He spent a Sunday at Warrington with the late Dr. Taylor, then at the head of that academy;

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academy; the first time, I imagine, these two kindred souls had the pleasure of meeting: but they were no strangers to one another, as they corresponded by letters, and the University of Glasgow had sent the Warrington Professor his degree of Doctor in Divinity; a literary honour to which very few men were so well entitled as he, though his great modesty made him surprised at receiving it without solicitation. In different places of England, Dr. Leechman unexpectedly met with his old scholars, who embraced him with very warm feelings of friendship and affection. On the whole, his health was so much confirmed by this excursion, that he was able to teach regularly during the two ensuing sessions, not, however, without some slight threatenings of the return of his former complaints.

After the death of Mr. Neil Campbell, Principal of the University, Dr. Leechman was raised to that office during the summer 1761, by a presentation from the king. For this last step of his advancement he was

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was chiefly indebted to Mr. Mure, then one of the Barons of the Exchequer in Scotland, his old pupil and intimate friend. The students of divinity saw with regret their Professor removed from a station where he had been so useful to them; yet they were happy to see him raised to what is the summit of ambition to a clergyman in Scotland; placed at the head of a respectable University, and in a situation where he could enjoy *otium cum dignitate*. Indeed the state of his health had been for some time so precarious, and he exerted himself in doing his duty to others with so much ardour, and so much indifference about his own health and life, that nothing could be more seasonable than this relaxation from the labour of public teaching. It was probably the principal means of prolonging his valuable life for five and twenty years.

Yet it was impossible for a mind so conscientious and so active as his was, to enjoy much ease in his new station, entrusted as he was with the oversight, both of the Morals and Literature of such a numerous society;

society; and having a peculiar trouble from his office with the superintendance and administration of the various branches of its revenue, more complicated and considerable, on the whole, than that of the other Scottish Universities. This trouble was doubtless encreased, from his having been little accustomed to business during his former life.

Besides, he did not confine himself to the ordinary routine of duty connected with his office; but entered warmly into every scheme for the benefit and improvement of the society suggested by other Professors, and prosecuted some schemes of his own suggestion. He gave a Lecture, for some time, once a week, to the students of divinity, which he was entitled to do as Primarius Professor; and during the session 1763, and several following sessions, he gave Weekly Lectures to the whole University, I believe, upon the Sunday evening, when they were disengaged from their peculiar studies;—Lectures upon various subjects, such as the *design of Academical Institutions*, and the conduct incumbent

cumbent both on the Masters and Scholars to answer this design:—upon *Self-knowledge*, as subservient to this, as well as to our general conduct in life:—upon the Wisdom and Benefit of Early Piety:—upon the Excellency of the Scriptures, with some other Lectures formerly delivered in the Divinity Hall, and now adapted to a more mixed audience. These Lectures were remembered and spoken of afterwards, as excellently calculated to inspire young minds with an ardour both for literary and moral improvement, and to stimulate them to strenuous exertions in this steep but pleasing path: to guard them against the influence of the spirit of scepticism and licentiousness, very catching in the present age; and to prepare them to make a manly stand, in their riper years, for truth, virtue, liberty, and every thing important to mankind. Several of the students, who attended these Evening Lectures, still remember the deep impressions which they made upon their minds at the time, the increased attachment to study, and the exertions excited by them.

These

These Lectures seem not to have been continued longer than the year 1766; but for more than ten years after, he continued to preach frequently in the College Chapel on subjects peculiarly adapted to his audience. In June 1767, he was called to preach before the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge in Scotland, and he published his sermon on the *Excellence of the Spirit or Genius of Christianity as a Spirit of Fortitude, of Love, and of a sound Mind*; a discourse not inferior to any of his former publications*.

His faculties remained in full vigour amidst the encreasing infirmities of old age, and his taste for valuable knowledge as acute as ever. This enabled him to be useful to many in his

* Not long after, a sermon was preached before the Synod of Aberdeen, and published by Professor Campbell of that university, on the very same subject, and from the same text, 2 Tim. i. 7. yet in the train of sentiment there is little or no coincidence. It is hard to say which of these two able and worthy men have done most justice to the subject. Dr. C.'s discourse is addressed to the judgment, and excels in just criticisms on the N. T. ingenious, deep, and accurate observations on human nature and human life. Dr. L.'s excels in animation, being more addressed to the heart.

private capacity. His house was open to students in every walk, where the conversation usually turned on subjects of learning and taste, and contributed to their improvement. The students of theology he naturally considered as more under his patronage than the rest; and he laid himself out to be especially useful to such of them, as chose to cultivate an acquaintance with him, by drawing them out into an easy unreserved conversation, tending to open and enlarge their minds; by directing the course of their reading; and freely giving them advice, with a candour and persuasive warmth in some sort peculiar to himself.

When he found, in students of this line, sparks of real genius and sterling worth, ready to be extinguished by the cold frowns of poverty and neglect, such students he cherished with the care of a fond parent; assisting them in the prosecution of their studies, not only by his advice but his money, his books, his interest to obtain for them the bursaries of the university, and his recommendations to such as were able to provide for them according to their merit :

merit: yet his sphere of usefulness in this way was not wide. He was however personally acquainted with a few men of rank in his own country, and lived in habits of intimacy with some of them; and his station, at the head of the University, gave him a slight connexion with a few more. To them he applied, with a modest freedom, in behalf of his friends; and his application had sometimes a more than common weight, from the known integrity and dignity of his character.

His efforts to do good were by no means confined to this particular channel, but equally assiduous and spirited in every other within his reach. Having no children of his own, he acted the part of a father to several children of his friends, who were educated at his house; and his bounty to necessitous families and persons, appeared, to the few who knew a little of it, far to exceed his abilities; for till within a year or two of his death, his income, *communibus annis*, was no more than a hundred and ninety pounds, upon which he was obliged to support the expences of

what is looked upon as a station of some eminence : but the funds of this bounty were supplied by a prudent œconomy, and even a generous self-denial. When a lady, who was his intimate friend, pressed him one day to change the *open* carriage he used, for a *close* one, as the expence of horses would be the same, he walked several times through the room without returning any answer. " I hear you thinking," said she, " shall I be so vain as " to set up a fine carriage?"—" No," said he, " I was thinking whether the difference in the tax, &c. would not give " more comfort to a certain family than I " could enjoy from that convenience myself." He sometimes thanked God he was born in a low station of life, because it taught him the many difficulties and hardships attending that state, to which otherwise he must have been a stranger. He often visited his relations in Dolphin-ton, who all, in their stations, deserved his countenance and approbation. He inquired feelingly into their circumstances and prospects ; took care that their children

dren should be properly educated, and entered into business; and whatever was needed for those purposes, beyond what they could conveniently raise, he supplied. As he was above the pride of station or rank, so he was equally above every other kind of pride. Distinguished as he was by his talents and virtues in the eyes of others, he seemed ignorant of this distinction himself. He had much of that child-like modesty and simplicity which often mark true genius and worth. No man ever saw him give a look, or heard him utter a sentence, that betrayed a consciousness of any superiority, even over the lowest of mankind.

For the last twelve years of his life, he was distressed with asthmatic and gravelly complaints, which he bore with great patience. Having in his youth improperly accustomed himself to late, rather than early hours of study; this, together with his asthma, gradually brought on a habit of night-waking, such, that for several years he had no sleep till six or seven in the morning, and then only very little, sometimes none at all for a

night or two together. Yet he never complained. When Mrs. Leechman expressed her regret for these tedious and tiresome nights—"why should I tire?" said he. "I have God, Providence, my Bible, and every thing connected with them, to think of; and, being free from pain, I am always able to pursue such a train of thought as is sufficiently agreeable." Nevertheless, the want of this best of all restoratives by degrees wasted his flesh, and exhausted his bodily strength, without having any visible effect upon his spirits. These continued invariably good. He was ever fit for business or conversation. His mind seemed indeed to be in a great measure independent of all bodily infirmities and connexions. Firm in its own native and acquired vigour, supported by the steady principles and joyful hopes of religion, and perpetually animated by some worthy purpose, it stood in no need of the amusements which weaker minds are obliged to have recourse to, in order to support or recruit their exhausted spirits. For these Dr. Leechman at no time of life had any inclination, though

though he was very indulgent to others. The only amusement, which he seemed to take pleasure in, was, the adorning and improving his farm of Achinairn, near Glasgow, and directing the operations going on there. Rural business perfectly suited the simplicity of his taste: he had contracted an early fondness of it, which continued to the last.

During the last years of his life, he considered *reading* as a mere amusement, and passed away in it many hours of the day and of the night very agreeably; but *conversation* was still more agreeable to him. Some of his happiest hours seemed to be those which he spent with a literary friend or two, of the same inquisitive turn with himself; in hearing their sentiments, and communicating his own, on books and men with a perfect freedom. Theological subjects were his favourite topic of conversation, especially Scripture knowledge and enquiry. He listened with unusual attention and pleasure to any thing new struck out by his ingenious friends in the course of their studies of the Scripture; any thing

that tended to throw light on the dark and difficult passages of the sacred writings, to remove objections, and place the grand discoveries of Divine Revelation in a clear and connected point of view. And being himself master of almost all that had been written by the learned in this way, he corrected or confirmed what was said, by his own judicious observations.—But I must not run into any farther detail.

THE time at last came, when this valuable man, beloved and revered by his friends, and by the society over which he presided, was to be removed from them, and introduced into a superior society. It had been his constant aim to employ faithfully and usefully, the talents entrusted by Heaven to his management. A sense of God had habitually and thoroughly possessed his mind. The stream of his religious principles and feelings had ever intermingled with the current of his ordinary thoughts; had run calm, evenly, and deep
in

in his soul; and given a new force to every exertion he made for the good of mankind, through the course of a long and laborious life. It was therefore to be expected, if his faculties remained, that he would enjoy the testimony of a good conscience, and feel the support of the faith and hope of the Gospel in his last moments. But few good men in this, or indeed in any age, have felt it to the degree in which he did, or exhibited at the close of life a spirit and a behaviour that came so very near to that of the primitive followers of Christ.

When Dr. Leechman was at his country house about the middle of September 1785, being now in the eightieth year of his age, his strength exhausted by the want of sleep, and his body worn to a shadow; he had a sudden and violent paralytic shock, in consequence of which he lay insensible for an hour. He came out of this, however, perfectly well, as if nothing had happened. But on the 24th of October he had a second shock of the same kind, that lasted only five minutes, and deprived him of the power of his whole left side, which he never

recovered, but he lay for six weeks longer in his bed in a state of extreme weakness. He was for the most part free from sharp pain, yet often, for days together, restless and distressed in every posture that could be contrived for him; which he bore with great patience. During this last scene of his life, he exhibited to those about him, a spectacle, not of compassion or regret, but worthy of admiration—a great soul in a manner without a body: for his bodily powers were all gone, except the power of speech, and this sometimes scarcely audible. But his mind retained its wonted vigour; continued in full possession of its faculties; often as intelligent, judicious, and even acute, as ever; always firm, serene, and happy, to a degree which he was unable to express. This visible contrast between the *weakness* of his body and the *strength* of his mind struck every person who was witness to it; especially his uncommon fortitude and joy in the prospect of his approaching dissolution. When some of us could not help expressing some surprise at his singular composure and fortitude, he confessed, he had

had often been a coward for pain, and perhaps was so still; but added, that he never had been afraid of death. His generous and kind affections too continued to flow with their usual vigour. He entered with spirit into any thing connected with the cause of religion and learning. He conversed with his friends, when he was able; interested himself in all their concerns as much as ever; administered consolation to such of them as needed it; affectionate exhortation and advice to others: he poured out warm wishes and prayers for their virtue and happiness, especially for the prosperity of the society with which he was connected. When unable to speak himself, he was happy in seeing one or two of his friends sitting by his bed-side, and in hearing them converse together on any ordinary subject. He threw in a word now and then, which showed that his mind was amused by what passed, and entered into it with ease, and sometimes with a degree of pleasantry.

His disorder took various turns, and once or twice flattered his friends, even his medical friends, with some slight hope of

a recovery. His own hopes, however, were very different from theirs; he knew *that the time of his departure was at hand*; he saw *death* full before him. But the frightful Spectre was disarmed of all its terrors. He beheld it, not only without pain and fear, not merely with a well-founded hope, but with the most perfect assurance that can be conceived, of enjoying a glorious immortality; an assurance founded, as he frequently declared, not upon the consciousness of any merit, or of any thing he had done to entitle him to it; but upon the goodness and grace of God, put beyond all doubt by Jesus Christ. To the few very intimate friends who had the happiness to converse with him on his death-bed, his mind appeared much delighted with the grateful recollection of all the undeserved mercies of God, which he had experienced during his past life, and quite transported with the unbounded and endless prospects of Divine goodness that were before him.

I will take the liberty to give a specimen of his conversation and devotions.

Professor

Professor Richardson called on him one evening, and brought to his bed-side a young Oxford student designed for the Church, the son of a late worthy nobleman, who had placed him at Glasgow college for the early part of his education, very much under the eye of Dr. Leechman. He took the young gentleman by the hand, and with a venerable placid aspect, an animated eye, a distinct, though feeble, articulation, he spoke to him, as near as can be recollected, in these words: " Mr. C——, I am always happy to see you; particularly so at present. You see the situation I am in. I have not many days to live; and I am glad you have had an opportunity of witnessing the tranquillity of my last moments. But, it is not tranquillity and composure alone: it is joy and triumph; it is complete exultation." His features kindled, his voice rose, as he spoke. " And whence," continued he, " does this exultation spring? From that book," pointing to a Bible that lay on a little table by his bed-side; " from that book, too much neglected in—
" deed,

“ deed, but which contains invaluable trea-
“ sures! treasures of joy and rejoicing: for
“ it makes us certain, that this mortal shall
“ put on immortality. You have chosen
“ the Church for your profession. You are
“ of the Church of England. I am a Pres-
“ byterian. The difference between us is
“ not great. I will therefore assure you,
“ that if you enter with a just and proper
“ spirit into the discharge of your duty,
“ you will find it a source of the highest
“ enjoyment in all periods of your life, and
“ especially in the close of it. If happi-
“ ness be connected with the contempla-
“ tion of the grandest and most elevating
“ objects, what can be grander or more sub-
“ lime than the views exhibited by Christi-
“ anity?—Your father was my friend. I
“ have always been interested in your wel-
“ fare; and I am happy on my death-bed,
“ to give you an old man’s blessing.” He
shook hands again, and parted with his
young friend, not a little affected with the
scene. Yet it was by no means a singular
one: for in this spirit and manner he con-
versed with several of his friends. And
the

the pleasing serenity and elevation of *his* mind communicated a degree of elevation to *theirs*, which they had seldom experienced; especially to Mrs. Leechman's, to whom he behaved with distinguished sympathy and tenderness. She continued at his bed-side night and day. It was indeed surprising how her delicate frame was able to bear the anxiety and fatigue of such an attendance. But her mind was calm, resigned, often very thankful. She had sometimes dreaded that her husband might be left behind her, and had figured this situation as uncomfortable to him. She had wished only for health and spirits sufficient to enable her to do her last duty to him; and, having obtained her wish, she was satisfied.

On a Sunday morning, during the time of Divine service, not many days before his death, he looked remarkably ill: his pulse sunk lower than usual. Upon which Mrs. Leechman said to him, "You seem, my dear, to be drawing near your journey's end."—"So much the better," he replied; "So much the better. Come, Lord

"Lord Jesus! come quickly." Then, after a short pause, "Into thy hands, O heavenly Father! I commit my spirit. Thou canst make me happy in ten thousand ways, which I cannot now conceive." Then he added, in a firmer and more elevated tone, "O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." And his animation and triumph still increasing, he continued, "This mortal shall put on immortality. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ:" And a good deal more in the same strain. Finding himself revive a little, and expecting, probably, that he should not have another opportunity, he desired his servants might be called up. He shook hands with them all; thanked them for the attention and concern they had shewn, and the toil they had lately had about him; gave his advice and blessing to each of them, and to every other person in the room. After this, he prayed;
and

and part of it was a most rational and pathetic prayer for the University, both masters and scholars. This was the longest exertion he was able to make on his death-bed; for he continued speaking for a considerable time with astonishing distinctness, vigour, and fervour. He exhausted himself, however, by this, and spoke little during the rest of that day. But the next day he sent for Dr. Finlay, Professor of Divinity, and regretted that he was now so weak, as to be unable to take farewell of the rest of his colleagues; desired the Doctor to carry to them his blessing, and his best advice, which was, to continue to do their duty, and to exert themselves in their several departments, as they had hitherto done. After which he offered up another short but fervent prayer for the University.

He lived several days after this, spoke very little, by reason of encreasing sickness and distress; but the calm, humble, and heavenly state of his mind continued unvaried. On the first of December he recovered so much, as to surprise every body, and conversed again with his friends in the most
easy

easy and cheerful manner imaginable. But this ray of hope was soon extinguished! For the next day he had a third attack of his disorder, not only on his extremities, like the former, but over his whole body; such, that it was thought impossible he could come out of it. He did, however, recover in an hour or two; and though he spoke nothing that evening but *yes* or *no* when a question was put to him; he seemed easy, or free from pain; his countenance resumed its wonted sensibility and placid serenity. His eyes, however, were for the most part shut, sometimes opened, only to lift them up to heaven, regardless of every thing around him, except Mrs. Leechman, who repeated to him a passage or two of Scripture, and a hymn * that he was fond of. Thus he continued till very early in the morning, December 3, when *he fell*

- The hour of my departure's come:
I hear the voice that calls me home.
At last, O Lord! let trouble cease,
And let thy servant die in peace.
The race appointed I have run,
The combat's o'er, the prize is won, &c. &c.

HYMN V. at the end of the Collection by the
General Assembly.

asleep,

asleep, and this in so easy a manner, that no body about him knew the exact time when it happened.

Such was the life, and such the death, of this good man. They afford a pleasing and striking proof, that Christianity has not grown old by length of time, but continues to exert, even at this day, its primitive happy influence on some of the most liberal and best cultivated minds. Of this cast was Dr. Leechman's. His increasing knowledge did not weaken, but strengthen his faith. He had within him a fund of *everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*; which became more and more lively the nearer he approached to the consummation of his hope, and rendered the last scene, amidst the most humiliating bodily weakness, by far the highest and happiest scene of his life *.

But the chief purpose of drawing up this plain and faithful narrative, and pre-
fixing

* Very sincere Christians have been sensibly disturbed at the view of the approach of death: and, on the other hand, very sceptical philosophers have seen it approach without any disturbance. Recent instances of both will be easily recollected. With respect to the last, to say nothing of the

fixing it to Dr. Leechman's Sermons, is, to add something, if possible, to their influence on the hearts of the serious and candid Readers of them. The affecting sentiments of religion uttered by this able preacher flowed from the very bottom of his own heart. He himself felt the power and comfort of them through life and at death. Discerning readers will be convinced of this, from a certain appearance, on the face of them, of inward sincerity and energy, which cannot be counterfeited. They, as well as others, will wish to be introduced to a nearer acquaintance with the Preacher, both in his public and private life. The Writer of this has attempted to gratify them. And if his attempt shall, with the blessing of God, contribute any thing at all towards their religious and virtuous improvement in the attentive perusal of these Sermons, this will give him even a higher satisfaction than that which he feels, though not inconsiderable, in doing justice to the me-

difference of minds, there is surely a difference also between that dead tranquillity or insensibility, produced by a philosophy, which sinks man after his last breath into the condition of the clods of the earth; and that animated joy, inspired by the well-founded hope of immortality.

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mory of a revered friend, and one of the first theological Teachers in this part of the island.

Dr. Leechman left his library to the Rev. Mr. William Pairman, his nephew, minister of Ely in Fife; except a large present of choice books and pamphlets, which he had made in his life-time to the Library belonging to the students of divinity in the University. He gave also to the same Library, on his death-bed, an interleaved quarto Bible, with manuscript notes in his own hand-writing; consisting of some short *observations* of his own, and many *references* to the chapters and pages of the books he had given to the Library for the illustration of the most difficult passages of the Old and New Testament.

All the rest of his manuscripts he left by his will to Mrs. Leechman, who, perhaps from a too partial friendship, put them into my hands, excepting some large volumes of abridgments, notes, and observations on most of the valuable books published during his life, jotted down in the course of his reading. These she gave to Mr. Pairman. Those entrusted to me com-

prehend the substance of most of the Lectures he delivered in the university: not only from the theological chair, but lectures on Ethics, Jurisprudence, Church-history, &c.; for he taught these classes occasionally, at the desire of his colleagues, after the death of their proper Professors, before the vacancies were supplied. All these lectures he was with some difficulty restrained from destroying; and, indeed, they are unfit, in their present state, for the public eye; and were never intended for it. 2. A considerable number of manuscript sermons. 3. A few discourses or essays on subjects of general learning, especially from ancient history, read to a weekly literary Society, of which he, and most of the other Professors, were members. With respect to the two last articles, it is much to be regretted that this worthy man never found leisure or inclination to prepare any thing for the press; not a single sermon in my hands having been transcribed for that purpose, or a fair copy made of it.

Yet, as he had consented, not long before his death, to revise as many of his sermons as, with those published by himself,

self, would make up a single volume ; and many of his friends have expressed their earnest wishes to see more of his sermons in print ; I have attempted to revise a few for that purpose. In the selection I have been guided, in some degree, by his own judgment : that is, I have selected such of the sermons as appear to have been most frequently preached, and, in consequence of this, have had the benefit of his own interlined corrections and additions, in as far as these could be made on a first copy, or a very small scrap of paper pinned to it. This rendered the manuscript, in some places, almost illegible. Except correcting some inaccuracies, and suppressing some redundancies of language and sentiments, I have scarce ventured to take any further liberties, aware of the dangerous impropriety of blending his nervous style with a more feeble one.

The Author himself was too much impressed with the weight and usefulness of the religious sentiments he felt, to pay a very delicate attention to the dress in which they were clothed. His excellence as a Preacher lay, in carrying his hearers along

with him, by the irresistible truth and force of what he said ; and not in pleasing them by an agreeable elegance of language and harmony of periods. Yet some of the sermons published by himself, with the life of Dr. Hutcheson (prefixed to his System of Moral Philosophy), show what Dr. Leechman could have done in this way, had he had sufficient leisure to polish his composition. But the rest of his sermons must now appear before the Public without the finishing polish of his pen, and with the other disadvantages of a posthumous publication. Yet, such as they are, it is hoped they will be an acceptable Present to his own scholars, and even to the world, on account of the just and striking sentiments, and the clear natural order, apparent in most of them ; together with an original cast of thought, and many strains of unstudied eloquence, that run through several of them. They are now left to speak for themselves.

JAMES WODROW.

STEVENSON,
August 1788.

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S E R M O N I.

The Temper, Character, and Duty of a
Minister of the Gospel.

Preached before the Synod of Glasgow and Air, at
Glasgow, April 7th, 1741.

1 TIM. iv. 16.

*Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine;
and continue in them; for in doing this,
thou shalt both save thyself, and them that
hear thee.*

THE wiser and more considerate part of mankind generally complain of the unsuccessfulness of the Gospel, and the low state of religion, notwithstanding the public establishments for religious instruction. It must be acknowledged, that there is but too much reason for the complaint. But on whom must the blame be laid?

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on the obstinate folly and depravity of the hearers; or on the ignorance, carelessness, and worldly lives of us the teachers? It is in vain either to deny or dissemble the matter; a great share of the blame may justly be charged on ourselves. It certainly then concerns us, greatly concerns us, as we are the established instructors of the rest of mankind, *to keep ourselves pure from the blood of all men*, by hearkening to this important admonition of the Apostle in the words of the text, *to take heed unto ourselves, and unto our doctrine, to continue in them; for in doing this, we shall both save ourselves, and them that hear us.*

In discoursing on this subject, it is hoped, it may not be improper, nor unsuitable to the present occasion, to endeavour, by the divine assistance, in the *first* place, to explain and illustrate these great rules of the Apostle in the same order in which they lie in the text: and then, *secondly*, to consider the motives by which the observation of them is enforced—*for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

First,

First, The rule, *take heed to thyself.*

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1. The meaning of this precept, in the lowest sense of it, is, that those who pretend to be the instructors and guides of the rest of mankind, should take care that their own behaviour be blameless and inoffensive; 1 Tim. iii. 2. *A bishop must be blameless.* We know the world expects a high pitch of purity from us, and examines our conduct with great severity; therefore we ought to watch over it with equal severity ourselves: and that we may in some measure answer the expectations of the world, let us abstain not only from all evil, but from all appearance of it too, not venturing so much as to approach near the boundary that separates virtue from vice; but in all cases, where there can be any dispute about the precise point where the laudable part ends and the blameable begins, let us take care to keep ourselves visibly, and to the conviction of all spectators, on the safe side of the disputed limit. If we keep invariably by this rule, we shall be so far from offending against temperance, that we shall be exemplary in it; so far from violating justice, and doing things

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things hard and rigorous, that we shall be ready to yield something even of our undoubted right; so far from being guilty of any indecency in behaviour or discourse, that we shall keep at a distance from every thing liable to the suspicion of it; and so far from exposing ourselves by a levity of carriage unbecoming our function, that we shall rather lean to the safer extreme of gravity and reserve. Nay, it may be necessary sometimes that we abstain from things perfectly indifferent in their own nature, when doing otherwise would offend our weaker Christian brethren, destroy our influence, or lessen our power of doing good.

Further, that our conduct may be unexceptionable, we must take heed to what is said or done in our presence, so as never to suffer ourselves to be carried away by a false modesty, or a vicious complaisance, to approve, or seem to approve, of what is base and unworthy, even in the company of those who are undoubtedly our superiors. While we shew all due regard to their stations and characters, it must appear at the same time that we have a greater regard for truth, virtue, piety, and decency;

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while we avoid every thing like insolence and pertness on the one hand, we must keep at the greatest distance from flattery and abject cringing on the other: when any subject of discourse is started that is impious, immoral, or indecent, or when any sentiments are uttered which tend to pollute the imagination or corrupt the heart, then all prudent methods must be taken to restrain such contagious discourse, by introducing some more innocent or useful topic. Sometimes the licentious conversation may be checked by serious reasoning and grave rebuke, if circumstances allow, and when there is any prospect of good from it; but as this is not to be done at all times, as every company will not bear it, and persons of bad temper will be provoked to proceed to greater outrages; in such cases we may discountenance it by withdrawing from the company, or by silence. But let it be observed, that it is not every kind of silence that can vindicate us; it must be a significant and expressive silence, that bears strong marks of our inward abhorrence of what is passing.

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Perhaps some of my brethren, whose situation and circumstances allow them, and whose real benevolence of heart leads them to be more frequently in mixed company, may think these rules favour too much of preciseness and austerity, and may imagine that they have been so happy in life as to recommend themselves to the upper part of the world, by abating somewhat of the rigour of them: but they would do well to consider, that very probably they may afterwards find they have been mistaken, and that those very persons to whom they imagined they were acceptable, inwardly condemn them, and take their own time to exclaim with great vehemency against them, and against the whole order for their sakes. These rules, reverend brethren, relating to our outward behaviour, though they are common and ordinary, and for that very reason apt to be overlooked, yet they are of great importance; for when a minister's life wants that purity and severity of manners which I have endeavoured to describe, his character can never rise to that dignity of virtue which begets esteem and

and authority, gives weight to his instructions, and influence to his example.

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II

2. This rule, *take heed to thyself*, requires us to take care that our real and inward character be agreeable to our external behaviour already described: we are not to rest satisfied with an intire blamelessness of outward character, but we must labour with the utmost diligence to acquire those improvements of understanding, and that pitch of purity of heart, which will give real worth and dignity to our inward man, and qualify us to fulfil the duties of our important stations with pleasure and success.

In the *first* place, let us study to acquire those improvements of understanding, which are in a peculiar manner proper to our sacred office, and highly necessary to answer the ends of it. Here it must be our first and chief care, to clear our minds from those mistakes and prejudices which darken them, and hinder us from perceiving the full worth and excellence of divine things, and from judging justly of the comparative value and importance of the doctrines of religion. This unbiaſſed state of mind

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mind is of great importance ; it is this that fits us for searching into the Scriptures with fairness and impartiality, that we may thence draw the great doctrines of faith pure and entire, without loading Christianity with what does not belong to it, or giving up any essential or important part of it : it is this too, which preserves us from an over-fondness for new opinions on the one hand, and from an over-great reverence for long-established ones on the other, and leads us to examine disputed points with great silence, suspense, and coolness, until full inquiry and strong evidence oblige us to take a side. But beside an unprejudiced mind, there are other previous qualifications necessary to obtain a thorough acquaintance with the great doctrines of religion, as they are delivered in the Scriptures ; such as a knowledge of the rules of right reasoning, and of the great principles of natural religion, together with a tolerable acquaintance with the original languages of the sacred authors, and with the history, antiquities, prevailing customs, and ordinary allusions of the respective ages in which they were written : without these
previous

previous preparations we cannot hope to reach the true meaning of the sacred books, to explain and illustrate them in a clear and delightful manner, and to judge with just discernment and taste, of the beauty, propriety, and force of their style. To which we may add, that without these previous branches of knowledge, we cannot successfully defend our holy religion against those attacks that are openly made upon it in our age: for it is in the Holy Scriptures that the chief evidence of our religion is exhibited to our view; and it is from the wrong translations, false expositions, and scholastic and metaphysical systems wrested from them, that the chief objections against it are drawn.

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After having studied the great principles of natural religion and morality, and learned the important truths of Christianity from an honest inquiry into divine revelation, it must be our next care to store our minds with a large treasure of the best moral and divine sentiments: these are the choice furniture of our souls; and from a plentiful store of them we shall find we are both qualified and disposed to teach others in the most

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most instructive and affecting manner. The Holy Scriptures will furnish us with a rich variety of the purest and sublimest sentiments moral and divine: and in other writers ancient and modern we may find a great number more, or at least the same greatly diversified and set in a thousand beautiful and striking lights. That our minds may be replenished with an abundant store and delightful variety of such thoughts, sentiments, and impressions, as the best of mankind have felt and described concerning God, providence, virtue, and every thing relating to the great interest of mankind, we must gather from all quarters: whether the writers be Christian or Pagan, let us think it our duty to borrow whatever is good and pure, whatever bears the marks of a heart smitten with the love of truth and virtue.

But as virtue, when displayed in the purest precepts or best descriptions, has only a faint and languid power over our minds, when compared with what we feel when it appears exerted into action, in the most interesting circumstances of a good man's life; it must be of very great use to us, to be

be furnished with a large collection of the most uncommon and striking examples of the several moral and divine virtues which are to be found either in sacred or common history: When these are introduced in a proper place, and painted with true simplicity, they can never fail to awaken the attention of the hearers, make deep impressions on their minds, continue rivetted in their memories, and give them the plainest, justest, and most engaging view of the great virtues of the Christian life. And that these improvements of understanding may be more useful to the world, we must first endeavour to attain that insight into the make and frame of the human mind, which will point out to us the shortest, most successful and agreeable method of informing the understanding and touching the heart; and then to acquire that knowledge of the world, of the tempers and characters of men, which will direct us how to advise and reprove without offence, and with just hope of success. There remain many other branches of knowledge, which would not only be ornamental, but highly useful to us in the way

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of

SERM. of our sacred business; but the time allotted for this discourse will not allow me to enumerate them.

I.

To conclude this head of discourse, let it be observed, that besides the great advantages of learning already mentioned, there are others not to be despised. A large field of science affords our minds a delightful scene, in which they may expatiate with pleasure: the pleasing projects and hopes of making improvement in this or the other branches of useful literature enliven life, and preserve it from that languor and deadness, to which it can scarce fail to be subjected, when it is not animated with some design, or directed to some valuable end: and, which is still of more importance, the thirst and pursuit of knowledge may contribute to preserve us from that immersion into worldly affairs, of which those must be in no small danger, who have not some employment for their leisure hours. To which may be added, that without a competent degree of knowledge, we can scarce escape falling into such blunders in our public appearances as well as private conversation, as must expose us to

to the ridicule of the more knowing and ingenious part of mankind. But amidst all our speculative studies, let us still remember, that all the improvements of the understanding, all the treasures of the memory, all the ornaments of the imagination, must be made subservient to the purification and refinement of the heart; which leads me to consider, in the second place,

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2. Those moral endowments which are required of us by the rule of the Apostle in the text, and which are absolutely necessary to fit us for the performing of the duties of our sacred office with faithfulness and success. As the heart is the seat of all the virtues, the whole improvement of it consists in cherishing and strengthening within our bosoms all those virtues of the Christian life, which it is our duty to teach and recommend unto others. There is one disposition which forms a principal part of that temper of mind which becomes a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus, and has a mighty influence on his whole behaviour and every part of his conduct, and therefore should be cultivated by us with the ut-

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most care; and that is, a noble elevation of soul above this present sensible world and all its transitory enjoyments. Our hearts cannot be raised to this divine temper in any other way but by a full conviction, that all those things which the bulk of mankind love with so much ardour, and pursue with such keenness, can never make them happy; and that the true happiness of life arises from the exercise of purity, sincerity, charity, piety, the consciousness of these virtues, the sense of the divine favour, and the ravishing prospect of a blessed immortality.

That we may attain this real elevation of soul, we must accustom ourselves to a frequent and lively contemplation of God, to a steadfast imitation of all his moral perfections, and to rejoice above all things in the humble and modest hope of being exalted to the perfect and everlasting enjoyment of him in an eternal world. For if we once felt and experienced the happiness that the contemplation of God, the resemblance of his moral perfections, and the sense of his friendship afford, there would spring from thence an unalterable persuasion, that life with

with all its other enjoyments, without these pure and spiritual pleasures, is but a vain dream, a transient shadow, a series of delusive amusements, which may flatter us for a while with fair and distant promises of happiness, but must soon leave us in disappointment and sorrow.

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Without this strong sense of the vanity and emptiness of all present and sensible things, and a clear view of the reality, importance, and transcendent worth of spiritual and unseen objects, we are not prepared to descend into the world, and to encounter the temptations of it. It is this elevation of soul that must inspire us with a hearty contempt of that scrambling for worldly dignity and advancement, which must certainly be a great reproach to us, who inculcate upon others that it ought to be their only ambition to act their part well in that station Providence has assigned them, and to obtain the approbation of God, which is the perfection of glory and honour. It is this must preserve us from the mean and sordid design of scraping together wealth and riches, which is utterly unbecoming us who call on the rest of man-

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kind to moderate their desires of these things, and whose business it is to persuade others, that the friendship of God, and those virtues and graces which form them to his resemblance, are the only real and durable riches; and it is this must secure ourselves from being dazzled with the shew and glitter of human life, while we preach unto others that *the fashion of this world passeth away*, and that spiritual and divine things alone shine with real and everlasting glory. It is the experience of the joys of a heavenly frame of mind that must prevent our mingling with the generality of mankind in their low and sordid pursuits, and entering with vehemence into their little parties and factions, formed on worldly views, and conducted by worldly measures. It is an high relish of the pleasures of the spiritual and divine life which will seat us as it were in security on an eminence, from whence we may look down with wonder mixed with pity on the blinded sons of men, who, like children, are contending with the utmost keenness for baubles and toys, which dazzle their eyes for a while with a vain glare, but must soon vanish like a dream:—In this situation

situation of mind, and with this mournful view of the state of mankind, we must be animated with the warmest zeal to take the veil off their eyes and convince them of their ignorance. SERM.
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What ignorance? I do not mean their ignorance of the intimate natures and essences of things, their ignorance of the great plan of Providence, and of numberless past, present, and future transactions of the universe; in a word, I do not mean that ignorance of things, which is commonly acknowledged, even by the acutest philosophers, though, no doubt, that kind of ignorance is humbling enough: but I mean a more lamentable, more mortifying, more fatal ignorance; their ignorance of those things which are the proper science of man in his present state; their ignorance of the inherent baseness of vice, and the misery that is inseparable from it, and of the intrinsic excellence of virtue, and the happiness that always accompanies it; their ignorance of the vanity and nothingness of worldly pleasures, and the everlasting worth and importance of spiritual and divine enjoyments: in a word, their ignorance of this great and cardinal truth,

SERM. *that it is life eternal to know the only true*
 I. *God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.*

How pathetic and emphatical is the description we have of this blindness of mankind: *Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* *.

Let it be observed, that what is said here about the ignorance of mankind, is not to be understood as if they had no theory or speculative notions about the chief good and true happiness, for the greatest part of them have something of this kind; but it is to be understood of their not having such an intimate and commanding conviction of this grand truth, that the only true happiness lies in the knowledge, the love, the resemblance, the enjoyment of God the sovereign good, as will make every other shadow of happiness quite disappear, and leave the mind in the full and unalterable persuasion that this spiritual happiness is all in all for time and for eternity.

Besides the many great advantages already mentioned, arising from a true ele-

* Rev. iii. 17.

vation of soul above sensible things, we may add several more; such as, that it gives a real dignity to our inward character, a commanding influence to our example, an uncommon force and sublimity to our discourses, renders our business our chief delight and joy, and makes *our light so to shine before men, that they seeing our good works, shall glorify our heavenly Father.* But the time allotted for this discourse will not permit us to enlarge on these things.

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Perhaps some may think, that the picture here given of that purity and elevation of heart, which becomes an instructor of mankind, is painted too high, or far beyond the life. But surely it must be owned, that it is our duty to aim at the highest pitch of virtue attainable in this present state. A little attention may convince us, that we are capable of arriving at incomparably higher impressions of God and divine things than we commonly feel. We may, by due care, and the aids of divine grace, rise to a pitch of esteem, admiration, love, and joy, in the contemplation of God, compared with which our ordinary sentiments

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ments and feelings are but like the faint impression made upon our minds by the idea of the sun when absent, compared with what we are conscious of when we behold him shining in all his glory. Nay, is it not matter of wonder and astonishment, that we who believe, we who inculcate upon others, that there is almighty power, infinite wisdom, and perfect goodness, perpetually presiding over the universe, and engaged on the side of righteousness and righteous persons; is it not, I say, very amazing, that by this belief our souls are not raised into a perpetual transport of joy and wonder, to something transcendently higher than we have yet felt—than we can well express by all the power of language? Surely it must appear very surprising to those who consider things calmly, that we who preach to others that *life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*, and who profess to entertain the firm and unshaken hope of another and better life, are not established by that glorious hope in an uninterrupted and delightful exaltation of soul, above all those things which engross the hearts and employ

employ the whole lives of worldly men. SERM.
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Can there be a more elevating, a more triumphant expectation, than that of living for ever in the abodes of perfect knowledge, virtue, and happiness? Is it not the natural effect of such a glorious hope, to deaden in us the love of this vain world, and make us pant after a better? Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself *even as he is pure* *. Let us endeavour then, by the proper helps of retirement, meditation, and prayer, to attain clearer views of the Deity and of divine things, to feel higher impressions of their worth and majesty, and to grow daily more convinced of their reality and importance, and of the joy and happiness that arise from the love and contemplation of them.

But let none conclude from what is said, that it is the duty of a Minister of the Gospel to devote his whole life to contemplation, to retire from the world, and maintain as little converse with mankind as an hermit shut up in his cell.—By no means. The most perfect character of a teacher of

* John, iii. 3.

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I. among mankind, converses with them,
and, at the same time, retains as much purity of mind, and discovers as much disengagement of heart from the world, as if he were entirely separated from it. For such a man is fitted to moderate the desires of worldly things in the rest of mankind, to lower their high notions of the excellence and happiness which they imagine to arise from the possession and enjoyment of them, to display the superior worth and importance of those things which are spiritual and divine, and to spread a sense of God and religion wherever he goes, and with whomsoever he converses: that this is the proper character of a teacher of true religion is very evident: for this was the character of Jesus Christ.

Before I finish this part of the discourse concerning that temper of mind which is in a peculiar manner becoming us who are ministers of the Gospel, and highly necessary to qualify us to fulfil the duties of our station, I must mention one important virtue which should be cultivated with the greatest care, and raised to its highest pitch;

pitch ; and that is, an unfeigned good-will and kind affection to our brethren of mankind. For this purpose let us consider them in all those tender views which may contribute to endear them to us, not only as children of the same great Parent of all, and as partakers of the same nature, but as creatures, fallen and degraded, in the same state of ignorance, corruption, and guilt ; as exiles in the same place of banishment from our native country ; as fellow-sufferers in the same scene of misery and distress ; as being equally liable to all the pains and calamities of this life, and equally subject to the stroke of death ; as fellow-travellers towards the same unseen world ; as followers of the same great Leader ; and as having all the difficulties and hardships of our struggling state of pilgrimage, sweetened with hopes which depend on the same great friend and benefactor of human kind, even the hopes of mingling with the divine assembly above, and there triumphing for ever over all the miseries of this mortal state. And if we lay open our souls to the full power of these interesting views of our fellow-creatures, we shall soon feel our hearts

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SERM. ^{I.} hearts streaming out towards them, in such a strong flow of tenderness and benevolence, as will extinguish the pride and vanity that are apt to arise from the little accidental advantages one man has above another. How is it possible that our hearts should swell with pride upon the account of any little transient superiority, when we reflect that we are all on a level in so many important circumstances, and that all worldly distinctions will soon be annihilated?

It is from these views too of our Christian brethren, that we shall feel our hearts melted down into a mild and forgiving temper. Has any one injured us? Let us consider mankind in a just light, and it will immediately strike us that the injury was done either through ignorance, or the impetuosity of some ungovernable passion. In both these cases, he that did the wrong is more properly an object of pity and compassion, than of anger and resentment. Besides, how can we continue implacable to others for those mistakes and workings of irregular passions to which we are liable ourselves?

To

To which we may add, as a thing of great importance, that it is from considering our brethren in these endearing views, that we shall feel ourselves inspired with the principles of true Christian moderation. When we observe others differing from us in opinion about lesser points ; or even, as it appears to us, erring from the truth in more important matters ; it will immediately occur to us, we are all in a state of much darkness, and equally liable to mistakes and errors. If we revolve this one thought in our minds with due attention, it can scarce fail to soften our hearts, and move us rather with pity, than passion and bitterness. Real love, affectionate sympathy, and just views of human nature, will lead us to reflect on all that vast variety of circumstances which may prevail on honest and worthy minds to embrace opinions widely different from those which we have espoused ; and consequently will inspire us with an abhorrence of the unchristian practice of representing their mistakes and designs as worse than they really are, of judging harshly about their state in another world, and desiring or endeavouring to ex-

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pose them to ill usage in this. In one word, real love will invariably incline us to make the largest allowances for the infirmities of mankind, to judge charitably of the honesty and sincerity of their hearts and intentions, and to be more forward to proclaim their virtues, than their mistakes and failings.

Further, one great advantage arising from a mild and moderate conduct is, that it places us in the most favourable situation for rectifying the mistakes and errors of those who have unhappily fallen into them. As long as we discover a real tenderness for their interest and characters we may justly hope they will hearken to our reasons, and lay open their minds to conviction. But as soon as we betray anger and bitterness, or use them harshly, we thereby prevent all the effect of the strongest arguments. When we see, for instance, youth, through a fondness for novelty, and the rashness to which that season of life is liable, hurried away to espouse new opinions with great vehemence, and throw off established doctrines, before they have time to consider and understand them; if we then discover passion and resentment, we can never hope
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to have any power over their minds. But SERM.
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 if we show them by the whole course of our behaviour, that we retain a sincere good-will to them, and a hearty concern for their interests; we may then perhaps prevail upon them to listen to our reasonings, and to suspend their forming any fixed judgment about the matter, until cooler thought, and more thorough examination, make them fitter judges of things. The experience of mankind justifies this observation. A man of wisdom and moderation sometimes convinces and reclaims those who have been misled; *but the wrath of man never works the righteousness of God:* nor can he ever hope to succeed in his designs, who acts in opposition to the meek and humble spirit of our blessed Saviour. This deserves the serious consideration of all friends to truth and virtue, and especially of those who are any-way concerned in the education of the rising generation.

Further, that general view of mankind presented to us above, will naturally lead us forward to consider our respective congregations in a nearer and more interesting point of light, even as a certain portion of

SERM. I. those fellow-travellers committed to our care through this journey of human life, and, by the appointment of Providence, especially intrusted to us for direction, assistance, and consolation. When we view our people in this new and endearing relation, as depending on us for instruction, when ignorant; for help, when distressed; and for comfort, when afflicted; we must be very insensible, if we do not feel a new flow of good-will towards them, a strong inclination to enter into their concerns, to take their pains and feelings upon us, and to watch for opportunities of doing them good. What though kind offices among them should take up much time, require much pains, put us to much real trouble and inconvenience, rob us of many agreeable amusements, and greatly interrupt delightful and useful studies?—Sense of duty, love to our people, and the pleasure of doing good, will reconcile us to all these hardships. A just sense of the important relations we stand in to our respective flocks, and a genuine feeling of that tender affection which is due to them, will not allow us to hesitate one moment, whether that part of

of our time is most worthily employed, SERM.
I.
which is taken up in doing real offices of friendship among them; or that part of it which is spent in perusing the finest writings of men of the greatest genius that ever appeared in the world, or in polishing any little compositions of our own. Is the arranging of words, the measuring of periods, the beautifying of language, or even storing our own minds with the divinest sentiments, an employment of equal dignity and importance in itself, or equally pleasant on reflection, with that of composing differences; extinguishing animosities; searching out modest indigent merit, and relieving it; comforting a melancholy heart; giving counsel to a perplexed mind; suspending pain by our sympathy and presence, though it were but for a moment; suggesting to an unfurnished mind proper materials for meditation in the time of distress; or laying hold of a favourable opportunity of conveying valuable instructions and religious impressions to a mind little susceptible of them on other occasions? There is no need of saying any thing in confirmation

SERM. 2 of this; it was the glorious character of
 I. 1 *Jesus, that he went about doing good.*

That we may be still more animated to cherish a real and tender affection to the people committed to our care, let us consider, that it must greatly increase our power of doing them good. A sincere good-will expressed by a constant series of kind offices, is the surest method of gaining the love and confidence of mankind. It is a powerful charm, which hardly ever fails to conquer every heart. Those of the meanest, as well as those of the greatest capacity, perceive it, and feel its force; even those who could not be won by any other methods, and who were perhaps determined to despise and neglect us, or thwart us in our designs, will not be able to stand out long against the power of uniform and unconquerable goodness. And when we have once been so happy as to gain the love and confidence of our people, it must be our own fault if they are not much bettered by us: for we have then ready access to their hearts; and our instructions either in public or private will be listened to with pleasure,

sure, and imbibed with eagerness: and our reproofs and admonitions, when flowing from love, will be received not only without resentment, but with strong desires of amendment: Thus we may succeed even beyond our expectations in promoting the eternal, as well as the temporal, interest of the people of whom we have the charge. But let us remember not to abuse their confidence, by making use of it to carry on our own worldly designs, or to feed our vanity with their applauses; but employ it only for the noble and divine purposes of rendering them daily wiser, better, and happier.

To conclude the illustration of this first rule: Let us, who are the Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, carefully study that blamelessness of life, and that peculiar cast and turn of inward character, without which we can never discharge the duties of our important station with pleasure to ourselves or advantage to others. And, in order to this, let us learn to dread and cautiously avoid that rock on which many split, *viz.* the resting satisfied with an imaginary excellence of outward character, while we

SERM. are conscious we possess but very low
I. measures of that inward excellence which alone can render us beautiful in the eye of God. Is it not almost incredible, that reasonable beings should labour so industriously and unweariedly to embellish and expose to view an *imaginary* self, whose sole existence is in the idea or breath of others, while they stupidly neglect to improve and adorn the *real* self within their own bosoms? Yet, strange as it is, daily observation puts it beyond all doubt, that great numbers of men endeavour, with the greatest eagerness, to crowd the appearances of all noble endowments and real virtues into their outward character, while they have not made so much as one sincere and vigorous effort to better their inward man. Is not this conduct just as vain and ridiculous, as if a man should be at the utmost pains to beautify a picture, and to make the whole world admire and applaud it as his exact likeness, while at the same time it had not the least resemblance of him; and his only safety from the utmost contempt lay in hiding himself, and never allowing any one to compare the real ugliness and deformity

formity of his person with the comeliness and beauty of his pretended image? SERM.
I.

I remember a passage of an ancient author, in which this folly of mankind is represented in a very strong light: "I have often wondered," says he, "how it should come to pass, that when every man loves himself more than others, yet every man should regard the opinions of others concerning him more than his own: for if God or an angel standing by, should command any of us to think nothing by himself but what he should presently speak out, no man would be able to endure it for so much as one day. Thus we fear more what our neighbour will think of us, than what we think and know of ourselves."

S E R M O N II.

The same Subject continued.

I TIM. iv. 16.

*Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine,
and continue in them; for in doing this,
thou shalt both save thyself, and them that
hear thee.*

SERM.
II.

HAVING attempted to illustrate and enforce, at considerable length, the first advice which the Apostle gives in this passage to Timothy, and through him to every Minister of Jesus Christ, *Take heed to thyself*; I now proceed to consider the second advice, *Take heed to thy doctrine*.

What is necessary for explaining and illustrating this part of the subject plainly arises from what has been said on the former. The proper improvement of the understand-

understanding, already mentioned, will fit us for teaching the truths of religion; and the purity of the heart, already described, will prepare and dispose us to inculcate the morals or the duties of it.

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II.

1. As to the truths of religion. From the diligent and impartial study of the Holy Scriptures and of natural religion, we shall be qualified to teach all those truths which are discoverable only by revelation, as well as those which the light of reason and revelation conspire to dictate. It cannot be called in question, but that by this rule, *of taking heed to our doctrine*, a principal thing required of us is, to declare the whole scheme of Christianity so far as it is revealed, without any mixture of human invention, in that plainness and simplicity in which it is delivered in the Holy Scriptures. That we may do this with greater faithfulness and impartiality, we must not represent Christianity as a chain of abstract speculations, and metaphysical truths, linked together in a certain order, and in a certain form of words of human contrivance; but as a set of important facts, or remarkable scenes of the great plan of Providence, in which

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which mankind are deeply interested, and which could not have been brought to light but by immediate revelation. When Christianity is represented in this view, it will not only make it more easily understood, but also more easily defended against the objections of its adversaries.

Thus, that mankind are at present in a state of ignorance, guilt, and corruption, is a fact seen, felt, and acknowledged. That Jesus Christ the Saviour is the only begotten Son of God, is delivered in Scripture, in an easy manner, as a plain fact. 1 John, iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten son, &c.* Heb. i. 5. *To which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?* It is further revealed to us, Col. i. 15, 16. *That he is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by him all things were created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; that he is the head of all principalities and powers.* Col. ii. 10. *And that in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.* John, i. 1. Who can venture to deny any

any of these facts, and to assert there is no person existing to whom all those characters in their full, proper, and highest sense may be ascribed? Who can pretend that his piercing eye hath surveyed the whole universe, and can declare that no such person exists? Who has presumption enough to affirm that he has seen through all the possibilities of things, and can assure us, that it is impossible any such person can exist?

That the word was made flesh is mentioned in Scripture as another fact. His incarnation is no doubt a mysterious miraculous thing. Is not the incarnation of any spiritual being an inexplicable thing to us, and quite beyond the reach of our faculties? That he taught us the will of God by his doctrine, and set us a pattern of perfect virtue in his life, is another simple matter of fact easily comprehended. That by his humiliation, sufferings, and death, he made atonement for the sins of men; that as a reward of his extraordinary obedience and sufferings, *he is exalted above every name*; that he now exercises a real, though invisible, dominion over the world,
and

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and that he will come to judge us at the last day in righteousness; are all delivered in Scripture, in an easy manner, as important parts of the great scheme of universal providence, and facts in which our highest interests are involved.

Now it must be acknowledged, that it is an indispensable part of our duty, as teachers of the religion of Jesus, to declare these and all the other truths discovered to us by revelation. We cannot justify ourselves as having declared the whole counsel of God, if we overlook any of them, neglect to teach them, or treat them only in a transient and superficial manner; for these doctrines of Christianity are of the highest importance to mankind. Is it not of importance, of great importance, to creatures in a state of ignorance, corruption, and guilt, to have it made known to them by an undoubted revelation, that, in the original plan of the divine government, there is a remedy provided for their misfortunes? How comfortable and rejoicing is the discovery that there is a particular dispensation of providence carrying on by the Son and Spirit of God for the recovery and salvation

salvation of mankind, who are in a state of SERM.
II.
apostacy and ruin? Does it not mightily
concern us to know those duties and in-
ward acts of religion which are due to Je-
sus Christ the Mediator, and the Holy
Ghost the guide and sanctifier of mankind?

Is it not beyond all contradiction a
matter of unspeakable importance, to have
it confirmed to us by an infallible revela-
tion, that this whole universe is one vast
and immortal empire, of which God is the
king and head; and that virtue and devo-
tion are the great, the standing, and ever-
lasting laws of this great kingdom, to which
all rational beings ought to pay a volun-
tary subjection? Can it be denied to be
of the highest consequence to us, to have
the particular branches of these immutable
laws, delivered to us by a messenger from
heaven, vested with the highest authority;
and not to be left to gather them from an-
cient traditions of an uncertain source, from
long deductions of human reasonings, from
the admonitions of philosophers, or even
from the dictates of our own hearts, where
there are such great mixtures of impurity?
Is it not a mighty advantage to have all
these rules of life exemplified in a perfect
pattern

SERMON. pattern by one clothed with mortality, and
 II. *who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin?* Is it not a thing of universally acknowledged importance, to have it ascertained to us by one who came from the spiritual and unseen world, that the righteous shall live there in immortal happiness and glory, and that the wicked and disobedient shall be thrust down to a place of everlasting punishment? Is it not of importance to the world, that these great truths of Christianity should be imprinted on the minds of the present race of men, and transmitted down to succeeding generations? Is there a succession of teachers appointed in the Christian church for this very purpose? Let us then bethink ourselves how we shall answer to the world, to our own consciences, and to God the judge of all, if we fail in this great branch of our duty.

2. As to the duties of religion. This rule, *Take heed to thy doctrine*, requires us to take heed how we teach the duties of the Gospel. That purity and elevation of heart which was recommended under the former rule, will both qualify and dispose us to teach and inculcate the whole compass

pass of practical religion and morality in the highest pitch of perfection attainable by mankind. It is of great consequence to display a high standard of morals before the eyes of mankind; for nothing can be more dangerous than to lower and accommodate it to the prevailing tastes or opinions of a degenerate age. If we come low, men will satisfy themselves with something still lower. Our Saviour has sufficiently directed our conduct in this matter, both by his doctrine and example, Matt. v. 48. *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Matt. xxii. 37. 39. *Whoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* Matt. v. 19. His whole divine sermon on the Mount is a summary of pure religion, freed from all those corrupt glosses and abatements which had been introduced to favour the corruptions of the hu-

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man heart; and his life is a standing and visible pattern of the highest and purest virtue. Now, though we cannot expect that mankind will ever arrive, in this state of imperfection, to a perfect conformity to the divine law; yet it is of great use to set the sublime standard full in their view. For we can never unveil to mankind in a clear manner, their hidden hypocrisy and corruption, check the growth of their secret pride, beget in them humility and lowliness of mind, and lead them to value justly the joyful doctrine of Christianity, that God accepts of sincerity instead of perfection, through the propitiation of Jesus; unless we give them a full view of the purity and perfection of the divine law, and direct them to compare themselves impartially with it, and thus convince them how far they fall below it. Besides, we can never explain the great doctrine of sincerity as a term of our acceptance with God, in such a way as that it shall not be liable to many dangerous abuses, unless we represent a perpetual aim and endeavour at an higher degree of perfection as the very essence, or, at least, an inseparable pro-

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erty

perty of it. Neither can we carry Christians forward in a constant progress toward perfection, unless we show them some pitch of it which they have not yet attained, to excite their desires and animate their endeavours.

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But we must not leave this head without observing, that when we have set before our hearers the purest and highest standard of religion, it is our duty at the same time to admonish them not to rely too much upon it. Men may have the justest and sublimest ideas of virtue and religion, and yet remain under the power of their guilty passions. Nay, perhaps, it is easier to frame the highest ideas of what is our duty in every circumstance of life, than to practise the lowest. All our ideas are only pictures or images of things in our imagination; and what appears fair and beautiful to men in the theory, they are inclined to believe must have the possession of their hearts, and a mighty influence on their lives. But in this they are often fatally mistaken; for when we look around us into the world, there is nothing more observable, than that many who have formed

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the purest and worthiest conceptions of the divine perfections, continue in a great measure void of those devout affections of heart which are due to them. In like manner, many of those who display in their discourses and writings the justest and noblest views of the native excellence of virtue, and its importance to the happiness of mankind, make very melancholy discoveries in their life, that it has scarce any power over their hearts. Since, therefore, they are apt to deceive themselves, fondly imagining that those things are inseparably connected together, which daily observation and experience convince us are widely distant; it is certainly the business of those who are appointed their instructors, to guard them against such dangerous and fatal mistakes.

Again, the goodness of heart required and expected from us by the former rule, must lead us to remark with great concern, the manifold failures of mankind in the great duties of practical religion; and particularly to observe those failures which are most remarkable and undisputed in the age or place of the world in which we live.

Do

Do we live in an age when devotion is fallen into disrepute, when whole sets of men discover many marks of indifference and contempt of all serious appearances of true religion, and look upon pious dispositions as unnecessary or superfluous ingredients of a worthy character? In such a situation of things, unaffected goodness will prompt us to suit our instructions to the temper of the age, and to urge it strongly, that adoration, esteem, love, gratitude, trust, and confidence, are as really due to God, as good-will and acts of beneficence are due to men;—that the relations betwixt God and his creatures are at least as real and immutable as the relations betwixt one creature and another.—That the purest and most durable joys of human life arise from the love of God, and an unbounded trust and confidence in his providence.—Nay, that without the love of God and trust in his goodness, there is a thick darkness spread over all things, and all rational security of joy is quite destroyed; that truth, integrity, and charity, and all the social virtues, must want their great support, when there is no hope, no trust,

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SERM. in an Almighty Being who delights in these
II. virtues, is the present friend, and will be the eternal rewarder, of those who uniformly practise them; and that the want of just and rational piety towards God, whatever other virtues we may boast of, certainly shall not pass unpunished under his righteous administration.

Besides what is already said concerning the necessity and advantages of true devotion, there remains another consideration of very great importance, namely, that not only the stable and uniform practice of all the virtues, but also the purity and perfection of them in the eye of God, depend in a great measure on a strong sense of infinite perfection, and what is due to it. For the illustration of this point, let us suppose a man whose character is not only beautified with all the private virtues, truth, sincerity, justice, charity, temperance, fortitude, but also with all the public virtues, zeal for the common good of society, unwearied labours to promote it, and joy in the establishment and advancement of it: if such a person should contemplate his virtues with a selfish kind of delight as his own

own productions, and the fruits of his own labour and industry, inwardly valuing himself on account of them, and secretly triumphing in his superiority to others; is it not evident that this mixture of vanity and self-applause would greatly sully the beauty, and diminish the worth, of the character, in the judgment of God and every good being? Now, is there any such effectual method of bearing down that self-admiration and self-complacency which are so apt to arise from the view of any little excellencies we possess, as the comparing them with the infinite perfections of the divine nature (which must make them almost disappear), and the habitual acknowledging, from the bottom of our hearts, that it is God who makes us differ from others, and bestows upon us all those virtues and talents of which we are so unjustly proud, and which we so vainly and foolishly ascribe to ourselves? Does not the viewing our graces, attainments, and accomplishments in this light, show us the reasonableness and equity of ascribing to God, and not to ourselves, all the praise and glory of them? We ought therefore

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to insist upon it, as an important and essential principle of religion, that as every good thing comes from God, so it should be referred to him, and the whole honour and glory of it sincerely and perpetually ascribed to him. Without this, there can be no perfect humility, no thorough greatness of soul, no stable, pure, disinterested virtue, no character entirely worthy and acceptable in the sight of him whose judgment is always according to truth.

That this is not mere speculation, unsupported by experience and observation, might be made evident, if it would not protract the discourse too much: for upon a careful examination of the history of ancient and modern ages, it would appear that those who have been celebrated for a pure, disinterested, and stable integrity and public spirit, were also remarkable for a pious veneration of the Deity, and a humble acknowledgment that their virtues, talents, and successes, were entirely owing to the goodness of his providence. That these considerations may have the greater weight, we must represent to our hearers in the strongest manner, that they are founded on the

the authority of divine revelation, and on SERM.
II.
this grand and undeniable truth, that the
infinite goodness of God is the source of
our existence and virtues, and of all that
is great, lovely, or good, in any part of
this vast universe: *From the Father of
lights cometh down every good and perfect
gift, and therefore, not unto us; not unto
us, but to him be the glory.*

Further, it may be of singular use to
represent the various acts of religion in
those amiable and inviting lights which
may touch the heart. Thus, how pleasant
a scene must it be to behold a person of
undoubted worth and virtue withdrawn
from the noise and hurry of worldly af-
fairs; all alone, silent, and solemn; lift-
ing up his eyes to heaven, and fixing his
thoughts on God his maker, devoutly ac-
knowledging him with the warmest grati-
tude as the author of his being, the pre-
server of his life, the fountain of his pre-
sent enjoyments, and the grand foundation
of his future hopes; praying him to for-
give his sins, to teach him his will, and to
guide him forward in the paths of up-
rightness; resigning himself without re-

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serve to the disposal of his providence, and settling his mind in perfect peace by trusting firmly in him? Again, let us suppose a family living in peace, harmony, and the uniform practice of all virtue, regularly uniting their hearts and voices in hymns of praise to God with every morning's light; and when the shadows of the evening are stretched out, recalling their thoughts from the world by a song of praise to *Him who makes the outgoings of the evenings and the mornings to rejoice; and then laying themselves down to sleep in peace, because their God sustains them.* Let us likewise suppose larger and more numerous societies meeting together in religious assemblies, to pay their joint homage and adoration to the great Parent of all; to celebrate his universal and never-failing goodness in joyful songs of praise; and to offer up their united and fervent prayers, that he may perpetually dispose them to walk uprightly, that he may be to them a sun and shield, may give them grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from them.

Is there any thing unlovely or forbidding, any thing unworthy of human nature,

ture, in such exercises of devotion? Should we have reason to be ashamed if we were found employed in them? Let us suppose we knew a country in which private and public acts of pure religion were in reputation, and regularly performed with solemnity, sincerity, and unaffected ardour; should we not love that country, and almost wish we were so happy as to live in such a joyful and devout society?

Let us farther suppose, that these devout worshippers discovered all the genuine marks and symptoms of inward devotion in their countenances and outward deportment. Could we justly express a contempt of them by calling them solemn grimaces and hypocritical airs? Has not true devotion its just and natural features and signs in the human countenance, as well as the social and friendly affections? However some people, who pretend to understanding and taste, may ridicule all the appearances and marks of devotion on the outward man; yet it must be acknowledged, even by those who consider things in no higher view than that of taste, that to be able to observe the native and just features of

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of real devotion, and to represent them in poetry, statuary, or painting, has always been esteemed one of the noblest efforts of a great and worthy genius. These things are sufficient evidences that it is the voice of mankind, that devout affections are no-wise dishonourable to human nature.

Further, if we feel the full power of pious dispositions in our own breasts, we shall be hence naturally led to make pathetic representations of them to others. Have we many inward and silent workings of heart towards God? Are we really struck with the contemplation of the divine perfections displayed in his works and in the revelations of his will? Are our hearts really penetrated with a sense of his grace and goodness? Are our souls warmed with gratitude, love, and praise? Do we feel an entire rest of mind on his providence and promises?—such a perfect rest of mind as banishes every disturbing thought, every anxious care, and produces a settled tranquillity within our bosoms? Can we triumph in the full security we have for all our valuable interests under his perfectly wise and righteous administrations? Is the
belief

belief that God is, and is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek him ; is this belief **SERM.**
like an immovable rock on which we stand **II.**
safe and happy amidst all the waves and
billows that can roar about us? Are we
continually gladdened with the glorious hope
that, in some future period of our existence,
we shall know our God more fully, love
him more ardently, and rejoice in him in
a more sure and triumphant manner? Is
this the inward state of our minds? Then
we shall find ourselves disposed to embrace
all occasions of representing these delightful
feelings in their full strength and force,
and with that warmth and emotion which
may convince others they are the genuine
sentiments of our hearts ; we shall not be
afraid or ashamed to own them, but unfold
them with freedom and boldness ; describe
them with a noble and manly assurance ;
and thus do our utmost to spread a sense of
religion in an unthinking and irregular
age.

Whatever ridicule or contempt we may
meet with, whatever names of superstitious
or visionary enthusiasts may be bestowed
upon us, let us, my brethren, stand by it,
and

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and maintain to the last that the joys of religion are the sun, the light, the life, and the consolation of our souls in all states, and amidst all the vicissitudes of human affairs; nay, let us insist upon it frequently and at full length, that the man who can support life without the rejoicing persuasion that there is an Almighty Being at the head of all things, who is engaged on the side of virtuous and holy persons, who befriends them while here, and will render them and their virtues immortal, illustrious, and triumphant hereafter, must either be quite insensible of the excellency of virtue, unconcerned about the eternal prosperity of those who love it and delight in it; or he must be so entirely immersed in pleasures, amusements, or worldly pursuits, as never to have made one calm and serious reflection. Thus, let us account it our duty and honour to be advocates for devotion in an age when it is treated with so much indifference and contempt, using all that variety of arguments in its behalf, that reason, revelation, or experience, can suggest. And if devotion must leave our land, let us have the mournful honour of shewing
amongst

amongst us its last and parting steps, so that posterity may be convinced it was not through the fault of those who were appointed the guardians and preservers of it.

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Again: Do we live in an age when other sets of men think meanly, and speak contemptuously, of truth, justice, charity, temperance, humility, and the rest of the great virtues of the Christian life? We must perpetually inculcate upon such persons, that no soundness in the faith, no solemnity of worship, no external observances, no flashes of devotion, no pretended inward manifestations, no zeal, how warm soever, for public matters, can ever compensate for the want of these essential ingredients of the spiritual life. And let us add; that on the practice of these virtues the happiness of society and of individuals in a great measure depends. And to crown all, let us dwell upon it, and inculcate it strongly, that righteousness, truth, and goodness, are the chief glory of God himself, and what renders him the worthy object of the love and worship of his reasonable offspring; and that these virtues must therefore be the brightest ornament of his rational creatures.

Your

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Your time will not allow me to enter upon many other things very worthy of our consideration, which belong to this rule of *taking heed to our doctrine*, neither will it permit me to enter upon the explication of the *third* rule,—*continue in them*.

Before I proceed to the motives with which these rules are enforced, I must beg to be allowed a few words concerning the manner of our teaching. Here, it must be our principal care to use plainness and simplicity, earnestness and sincerity. We must have no other view, but to instruct and persuade those who listen to us, laying aside all affectation, all aims of gaining applause, or advancing any worldly interest. If we are actuated by any of these low motives, they will spoil the whole power, and prevent all the influence, with which our discourses might otherwise be accompanied. If we would preach with any just hope of success, we must treat divine subjects with such sincerity and earnestness as to forget ourselves, and convince our hearers that we have no other view in speaking but to stamp those virtuous and
pious

pious impressions on *their* hearts, which we feel in *our own*. We must make it our perpetual care to confine and fix the attention of the hearer to the subject, and not to the speaker, by never suffering one turn of thought or expression to escape from us, that has no other view than to please and shine. We must avoid with a particular care all affectation of fine language, and a glittering kind of eloquence, which, whatever useless admiration it may raise in weak judges, must produce great contempt in more judicious ones. For those who have a just taste and true discernment know, that a gaudy and florid style, how soft and agreeable soever, can never either touch the heart, or communicate distinct and strong views of divine truths.

If then we would attain to true eloquence, we must cherish an inward sense of the importance and excellency of sacred truths, and cultivate a strong feeling of all the virtues. For when our own hearts have once felt the warmth of divine things, it will be easy for us to transfuse it into the breasts of others. The inward feelings of a good heart have a natural eloquence accompanying them, which can never be equalled
by

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II.

SERM. by laboured and studied ornament. The
II. heart really and justly moved, never fails
to dictate a language plain and easy, full
of natural and continued vigour, which
has nothing in it soft, nothing languish-
ing. All is nervous and strong, and
does not so much please the ear as fill and
ravish the soul. Further, let it be taken
notice of as a thing of the utmost import-
ance, that sincerity alone, and a real desire
to instruct and persuade, will banish all af-
fectionation, either of sentiment or language.
This is evident from the conduct of man-
kind in all circumstances where they are in
earnest. For instance, a wise, virtuous, and
pious parent, when he has a near prospect
of entering into an invisible world, and only
so much strength remaining as to enable
him to give his last and dying instructions
to his beloved children who stand weeping
around him;—will he study to express
himself with artificial eloquence, and indus-
triously search for glittering ornament?—
Surely he will not: or if he should, how
absurd, nay how shocking and monstrous
would his conduct appear to every impar-
tial spectator! The application is easy,
and there is no occasion for insisting on it.
Allow

Allow me to conclude this part of the discourse with observing what has been hinted at above, that this divine eloquence cannot be acquired by human learning and skill in the choice and arrangement of words, but by a powerful feeling of what is great and good produced in us by the holy spirit of God.

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II. I come now to the second general head proposed, to consider the motives enforcing the exhortation; and there are two of them: 1. *In doing this, thou shalt save thy own soul.* It is proper to observe, that we are under two different sorts of obligation; the one is, to perform all those duties which belong to our private station, as we are men and Christians; the other is, to perform such duties as belong to that public station wherein Providence has placed us. Both of these are equally necessary to complete a truly good and worthy character. Thus, though a judge should be quite blameless in the whole tenor of his private behaviour, yet if he should neglect, through carelessness and indolence, to embrace many opportunities of dispensing justice, and of promoting the welfare of society, by his

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influence and authority, he would be highly blamable, perhaps as highly blamable as if he had failed to do justice in private life; and he could not reasonably expect to escape that punishment from the great Judge of all, which such a criminal omission deserves. In like manner, though a Minister behaves himself with unspotted virtue and innocence in private life, yet if he has no zeal for answering the end of his office, if he spends that time in indolence and idleness, or even in acquiring real knowledge, which ought to have been employed in doing good offices among his people, or in preparing himself to instruct them in a more convincing manner, he cannot expect that he shall be acquitted at the last, either by his own conscience, or God, who is greater than conscience.

It deserves to be remembered as a matter of great importance, and as a very awful consideration, that negligence or carelessness about the duties of our public station may have more dreadful consequences under the government of a righteous Judge than we are ordinarily aware of. The criminal omission or careless performance of
the

the duties belonging to a public character and station, may be as hurtful to the great interests of mankind in this or another life, as positive acts of vice and unrighteousness; so that none of us can be assured but they may be followed by as severe chastisements in this world, or as dreadful punishments in another. If we allow the impressions of God and religion to wear out of our people's minds by our careless or indifferent manner of instructing them, several generations may pass away before they can be renewed. If we sow the seeds of folly and superstition among them, through a blind mistaken zeal, it may take the labours of wise and good men for several ages to root them out. May not that long train of mischiefs which take their rise from our negligence or misguided zeal, be justly charged upon us? If we either neglect to instruct our people, or mislead them, can we be free from the blood of the present or succeeding generations?

When therefore we ascend our pulpits, and behold a listening congregation around us, let us ask ourselves seriously, as in the sight of God, whether the doctrines we are

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about to deliver, have a real tendency to make them wiser and better, to enlighten their minds, purify their hearts, or reform their lives? And if we are conscious that their tendency is good, let us again ask ourselves, whether we are about to utter such powerful and striking sentiments as the subject will admit of, and as a more careful preparation might have suggested to us? Have we such an affecting and commanding sense of divine things on our minds, as will awaken and engage the attention of the hearers, efface the worldly impressions that have been made on their minds through the week, enter into their affections and inspire them with a contempt of earthly enjoyments, and kindle in them the love, esteem, and admiration of the things which are heavenly and divine? And as to the general conduct of our lives, let us seriously ask ourselves, have we done all we ought to have done, and might have done, to alleviate, or in some cases to annihilate, and in other cases entirely prevent, many of the miseries of our people, by tender offices of compassion, benevolence, and humanity? Or have we done
all

all that might have been done by persons in our circumstances, and with our abilities (whatever they are), to propagate a true sense of virtue and religion among mankind? Or have we done as much as has been done this way by those who were in as unfavourable circumstances, and had not superior abilities? Can we pretend to faithfulness in our office if we do not honestly endeavour to do our utmost to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind? Or can we reasonably expect the salvation of our souls, if we are not faithful to the utmost?

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2. The second motive is, *That we shall save the souls of them that hear us.* The former motive urges us to take heed to ourselves and our doctrine for our own sakes: the latter is of a more generous and disinterested kind, recommending it to us to take care of ourselves and doctrine for the sake of others. If we feel the force of this double obligation, we shall watch over ourselves with double care and diligence. As no thought can be more terrifying than that the souls of mankind should perish through the example of our unholy lives, or through our careless or corrupt doctrine;

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so on the other hand, no consideration can be more rejoicing and triumphant than that they should be saved by means of that worthy example we set before them, and those pure and heavenly lessons of virtue and piety which we honestly impart to them.

Since the soul of man is the most excellent piece of the divine workmanship in this lower world, since it far surpasses in dignity and excellence the whole fabric of the visible creation; it must undoubtedly be a most glorious employment to promote its worth, its welfare, and eternal prosperity. It is impossible to conceive a more divine employment than to maintain a command and power over the minds of men by the force of truth and virtue; for this is in some degree to resemble God himself, the author and inspirer of every good and perfect gift: to be instrumental in making reason and virtue to prevail in the hearts and lives of mankind, is an office no less honourable, than that of being a *fellow-worker with God* in his grand design of establishing the happiness of his creation. Besides the dignity of the work itself, let us lift up our thoughts to the

everlasting honour and reward that attends it in the other world, *For they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.*

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To conclude: Let us endeavour, in a humble dependence on the holy spirit of God, who favours and seconds every worthy design, to take such care of ourselves and of our doctrine, as that we may have *many to be our crown of rejoicing at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may at last hear that joyful sentence passed upon us, Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*

I am very sensible that I ought before this to have acknowledged my own unfitness to speak so much from this place, and with the air of an instructor, before so discerning an audience, before so many reverend fathers and brethren, under whom it would have become me better to sit as an humble hearer. The task was neither my choice nor desire, but imposed upon me. I have endeavoured, according to my small ability, to represent a few things concern-

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ing the temper and duty of a Minister of the Gospel, which appeared to me of great importance, and which I find much need to inculcate frequently on my own mind. I shall rejoice, greatly rejoice, if I be found to be the only one who has any occasion to be reminded of them.

Having exhorted my reverend fathers and brethren to take heed how they teach, allow me now to call on you, the people, *to take heed how ye hear*. We may justly invite you to listen to our instructions with an unprejudiced mind, and a sincere intention to know the will of God, that ye may do it. To this end, hearken to us with humbleness of mind, with a deep sense of your want of divine knowledge, or at least of your great need to have the impressions of divine things renewed and more deeply engraven on your hearts. Hearken to us also with a strong sense of your manifold hidden corruptions of heart; or, at least, of your want of that pitch of purity and spiritual-mindedness which becomes the followers of Jesus Christ. In this favourable state of mind, lay open your souls to the light of divine truth, and to the lively impres-

impression of heavenly and eternal objects. SERM.
Seriously consider what ye hear, and ho- II.
nestly apply it.

The main hindrance to your receiving real advantage from sacred instructions, is the want of that simplicity and honesty of heart which would lead you to consider every rule of life, every admonition, every enforcement of duty, as something that concerns yourselves in particular, and may be of use to mend your hearts or better your lives. There is nothing more observable among mankind than a certain careless humour of looking upon religious instructions as not belonging to themselves, but only to the rest of the world. Perhaps, indeed, they will not entirely disregard them; possibly they may listen to them with pleasure, treasure them up in their memories, speak of them afterwards with something of warmth and emotion, admire the justness of them, applaud the preacher, and express great surprise and wonder that the rest of mankind do not apply them to correct the disorders of their hearts and irregularities of their lives. But they seldom allow themselves to reflect that those very instructions
which

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II. ly useful to themselves. Consider, it is not
enough that you approve of the discourse
and applaud the speaker;—applause will
not satisfy a sincere instructor—he requires
more substantial praise,—your reformation
and amendment. What a mortifying dis-
appointment is it to a faithful teacher, to
meet with nothing but empty praise from
his hearers, when he intended, wished, and
expected to have inspired them with wor-
thy resolutions, or engaged them in gene-
rous undertakings! To conclude; remem-
ber that it will more effectually animate
your Ministers in their public ministrations,
to be assured that there is one person in
their several congregations listening to them
with an earnest desire to learn his duty
that he may practise it, than to know that
all the rest are applauding them; and that
it will rejoice their hearts more, to find that
they have been so happy as to convey one
important instruction, or rivet one worthy
impression, than to be surrounded with
the praises of the most numerous and dis-
cerning audience.

May

May the Ministers of the Gospel of SERM.
II.
Jesus be taught to teach, and you to hear, }
in such a manner that we may be mutual
comforts to one another in this present
world, and at last meet together in the di-
vine assembly above, to live in immortal
friendship with one another, and in eternal
communion with Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit. Amen.

S E R M O N III.

The Nature, Reasonableness, and Advantages of Prayer.

MATT. xxvi. 41.

— *Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

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WHEN we consider that our blessed Saviour has commanded us to pray, directed us in what manner we ought to pray, and set us an example of frequent prayer in his own practice; it must appear surprising, that any who pretend to be his followers should indulge themselves in a determined contempt, or careless neglect, of this important duty. But, surprising as it is, a little acquaintance with what passes in the world, puts it beyond all doubt that the express precepts, and conspicuous example, of the great Instructor of mankind with regard to prayer, are treated slightly,
nay

may even contemptuously, by some of SERM. III. those who call themselves his disciples. To what causes can such strange inconsistency betwixt the profession and practice of Christians be ascribed? There may be many and various causes of it, according to the different turns of men's tempers and pursuits in life. But as it would detain us too long to enumerate them all, let it suffice at present to take notice of that which every one who has reflected on what passes in the world in his own time, or has looked into the history of former ages, must have observed; namely, That the best things may fall into disrepute, and consequently into disuse, for no other reason but because they have been abused by the weak, or the artful and designing part of mankind. Thus prayer, an excellent thing in itself, and a noble mean of improving our souls in every thing virtuous and praise-worthy, is sunk into contempt among one part of the world, from this accidental circumstance, that weak and well-meaning people have sometimes sullied its native beauty by a mixture of low superstition; or, because worldly and designing

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designing men have perverted it to serve their wicked purposes.

In discoursing therefore on this subject, it is hoped it may not be unuseful to endeavour,

I. In the *first* place, to explain the nature of prayer, and to set it in its true light, by stripping it of all foreign and superfluous circumstances.

II. In the *second* place, to vindicate it from the objections commonly urged against it. And,

III. *Thirdly*, to point out the advantages which arise from the sincere and steadfast practice of it.

Before we enter upon the consideration of these heads, it is proper to observe, that prayer is to be understood in a restrained sense in this discourse; as signifying chiefly that part of devotion commonly called *petition*; as distinguished from adoration and thanksgiving, which are frequently comprehended in the meaning of the word *prayer*.

In order to understand the nature of Prayer, let us take notice that the *inward*
acts

acts of mind and heart exerted in it, from which the *outward* expressions should flow, and by which they should be animated, are principally these three following:

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First, A lively and intimate persuasion that we are utterly insufficient for our own happiness, and that we depend entirely upon our Maker for all we possess here, or hope to enjoy hereafter. That we are in a dependent and indigent, a dark and uncertain state of being, is obvious on the first reflection; we discern, we feel in ourselves many marks of our dependence, our indigence, and ignorance. We find ourselves possessed of an existence, which, if we only regard this present life, is confined within very narrow bounds, and extends only to a very short period. We see all creatures about us continually disappearing, after having acted their part but a few years on this stage; and we cannot avoid expecting the same fate ourselves; that we must soon withdraw into darkness and make room for others: as we came into being without our own choice or consent at the pleasure of another; so we must depart out of this state of being at the command

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mand of him who sent us into it; and even while we are allowed to continue here, we can neither procure for ourselves all the good things we want and desire, nor secure the possession of what we already enjoy: we feel manifold wants which we cannot supply; we groan under manifold imperfections and infirmities which we cannot remove; we are liable to innumerable dangers, many of which we do not foresee; and from others, even when we do see them approaching us, we cannot defend ourselves. We are conscious that we are not only in some instances weak and helpless, but very ignorant and uncertain of many things which nearly concern us. We know not what shall befall us in our passage through this life; nor at what time, in what manner, or circumstances, we shall make our *exit* from it into another: neither know we what our state or employment shall be in those other regions into which we must enter when we depart from this world.

But the most lamentable and mortifying ignorance is still behind, namely, ignorance of our duty, or the great rule of life; ig-
norance

ignorance of our true happiness, and the way that leads unto it. Though we have some general knowledge of our duty from the light of reason and revelation, yet we find that we are not only in danger of erring, but frequently do err, in applying general rules to particular instances of our conduct. Daily experience convinces us, that a regard to worldly interests, and the strength of irregular appetites and passions, greatly darken our understandings, and occasion such false judgments concerning our behaviour, as necessarily lead us astray from the path of life; and, surely, we have great reason to dread the consequences of a departure from the law of righteousness, under the government of the righteous Judge of all the earth. In like manner, though we have some general and speculative knowledge concerning our true happiness or chief good, yet our own experience, as well as observation of the world, may convince us, that our views of it are not so clear and striking as, at all times, to prevent our pursuing false appearances of it; for, alas! how frequently, how fatally, are we disappointed; finding those things vain

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and unsatisfactory, in which our fond imagination had promised us happiness? We have no security in ourselves that we shall not be guilty of the same transgressions of the law of virtue, and the same departures from the path of happiness, in the succeeding stages of our lives, that we have been in the former ones. Now, every man who has seriously considered how wretched and helpless he is in himself, will find the necessity of flying out of himself and of taking refuge in *Him* who made him, and upholds him in being. Which leads us to the

Second act of the soul exerted in Prayer, namely, the lifting it up with the utmost ardour to that greatest and best of Beings who brought us into life, and assigned us our station in it; entreating him to teach us what part we should act; to dispel all that darkness of understanding which is so apt to mislead us from the right path; to forgive our sins and follies; to deliver us from the fatal consequences of all our errors; to preserve us from relapsing into them; and to guide us safely to some proper mansions of rest, of light, and joy, beyond

beyond the grave. Every one who has
imprinted on his mind a just sense of his
ignorance, weakness, guilt, and danger,
will find an inward necessity constraining
him to have recourse, in fervent Prayer, to
the great Author of his being, to conduct
him safely through this stage of his exist-
ence; to continue his providential care, in
guiding him through the valley and sha-
dow of death; and to settle him at last in
some happier place of abode.

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The *third* act of mind exerted in Prayer,
is a firm belief and assured trust in that God
to whom we pray, and on whom we de-
pend, that he will not only always do
what is best, what tends to the greatest
good of the whole system of intelligent be-
ings; but that he will, sooner or later,
bring every one who sincerely seeks wis-
dom from him, to the possession of perfect
virtue and everlasting happiness. Without
this confidence in the infinite mercy of the
great Father of all, there would be no
foundation for Prayer, nor encouragement
to the practice of it.

When we enquire into the doctrine of
divine revelation on this head, we find

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lively and unshaken acts of trust in God are by it represented as equally necessary and essential parts of Prayer, with either of those already mentioned. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.* James, i. 5, 6. There are numberless joyful declarations to the same purpose in the books of the Old Testament; such as, *The Lord is nigh to all them that call upon him in truth: he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them.* Psalm cxlv. 18, 19. Our blessed Saviour hath expressly renewed and confirmed all those delightful promises which were published by the inspired writers under former dispensations. *Ask* (says he), *and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and*

to him that knocketh, it shall be opened: or, SERM.
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what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone; or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them who ask him? Matt. vii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

That these particular and positive declarations of the will of God are more fully satisfactory to the human mind, and more directly calculated to encourage the study and practice of true religion, than the general persuasion that God will always do what is fittest and best, is so evident, that it is needless to spend time in illustrating it. What great numbers of mankind are capable of understanding a plain and express promise, and of drawing the highest consolation and encouragement from it in the course of a virtuous life, who could never have reasoned out to themselves a clear and just character of the Deity, nor inferred from it, that he would constantly and universally connect felicity with virtue? This plainly shews us, that it is an unspeakable advantage to enjoy such a clear revelation

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of the will of God, as banishes all doubt and uncertainty concerning the method in which he treats his apostate and guilty creatures. But at the same time it may be observed, that there is good ground to hope it always has been, is at present, and will for ever be, the great, the standing, the invariable law of the divine government, to bestow wisdom, virtue, and happiness, upon all those who ask them with unfeigned sincerity of heart, even though they never heard of those comfortable promises on which our souls rest securely; for it is very observable, that these joyful assurances from the great Father of all, that he will be found of those who seek him, are expressed in such general terms, as to exclude no one, of whatever nation or country. Besides, nothing can be more agreeable to the all-perfect character of him, who is no *respector of persons, and accepteth those in every nation who fear him and work righteousness*, than to befriend and assist all those who sincerely seek his aid. May we not then indulge ourselves in the charitable hope, wherever there was any one found, even in the heathen world, groaning under a
sense

sense of his deep ignorance and depravity, and earnestly panting after light and purity, that God never did deny his grace to such a person, but enlightened him with as much knowledge as was necessary for purifying his heart, and guiding him forward in the paths of goodness? As it must be acknowledged, that that sincerity and honesty of heart, which prompts any one to seek direction and assistance from above, is itself a gift, a special gift of God; so it should likewise be owned, that there is no reason to suspect that God will deny what further light and assistance may be necessary for him, whom he has already distinguished so far with his favour, as to bestow upon him sincerity and uprightness of heart, provided he maintains and cherishes that lovely disposition, and earnestly asks the direction of heaven in true humility.

Before we conclude this head of the discourse, let it be remarked, in order to prevent mistakes, that when it is said, *God will accomplish the desires of those who seek him*, this must always be understood of those who seek him with real sincerity and humility of soul (virtues indispensably re-

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quired in the Gospel of Jesus Christ), and who, in a constant dependence on the divine assistance, exert their utmost endeavours to do whatever they can discern to be the will of God. Further, this doctrine of the certainty of obtaining our requests, must only be understood of what is necessary for enlightening and assisting us in the paths of virtue; and should by no means be extended to a thousand other things which we may desire to know or possess, though they have no inseparable connection with our virtue or happiness. We may be apt to wish, with the greatest fondness, for uninterrupted health, ease, and pleasure, through our whole lives; but in these things we must not hope to be gratified. We must learn to leave the all-wise Disposer of every event to lead us to happiness in whatever path he pleases, whether it be the hard and rugged one of adversity and affliction, or the more soft and smooth one of prosperity and joy.

And, lastly, let us carefully remember, that there is no ground to expect that even our best and most pious desires are to be accomplished all at once, and in an instant;

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we must wait with patience till God shall finish his own work by the various methods of his providence and grace: it is with the works of God within us, as with the works of nature without us, they are not completed all at once, and in an instant; they require time, and are brought to perfection by slow and insensible degrees. A child must have time to become a man. The tree which is but just now planted, must have time to grow up to its full maturity, and bring forth fruit. In like manner, the progress of the soul towards perfection in virtue, is by slow advances. Bad habits must be gradually weakened and overcome; and good dispositions must be raised to their proper height by an almost imperceptible increase. In a word, though we may be assured that our heavenly Father will bring us to perfection in glory and happiness at last, yet it is only by the slow and almost indiscernible steps of his providence and grace that we must be ripened for it.

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Now, from this view of Prayer, it appears, in the first place, that there is a foundation

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foundation laid for it, in the nature and circumstances of mankind, as dependent, ignorant, weak, and guilty creatures, and in those manifestations their Creator hath given them of his glorious perfections, as employed for their safety and welfare. And, in the second place, from what has been said of the inward acts of mind and heart exerted in Prayer, we may infer, that every well-disposed person (who will be at the pains to consider things impartially, and to distinguish betwixt pure Prayer itself, and those odd and foolish things which may sometimes mingle with it) must see that *Prayer* is a thing highly reasonable; that *it* is unavoidable to those who allow themselves to think seriously; that *it* is fit and becoming in the present state and circumstances of mankind; and that *it* has a natural tendency to beget and promote all those amiable and important dispositions of mind, which render men happy in themselves, useful in this world, or fit for another. And, in the third place, this explication of the nature of Prayer may furnish us with proper answers to the objections against

against it, commonly insisted on by those whose minds are under the power of prejudices; which leads us to the

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Second Head proposed above, namely, To vindicate Prayer from the objections commonly urged against it.

First, then, it is objected by some, "That an omniscient God knows already what we want before we ask it; and to what purpose do we ask those things which he already knows we stand in need of?" The answer to this objection is evident: That the design of Prayer is not to inform God of things which he did not know before. This is so far from being the design of it, that every one, even of the meanest capacity, understands, that, when he addresses himself to his Maker, he ought to have it expressly in his consideration, that he to whom he prays knows all his wants already, every circumstance of his condition, and every thought of his heart.

The real design of Prayer is, in the first place, to express, under a lively impression of the presence of God, the sense we have of our dependence upon him, of our manifold

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nifold wants, and that he alone is able to supply them; and to make this sense more deep and affecting. Now, since it is a certain truth that we depend upon God, and have numberless wants, the supplying of which we can expect from God alone, is it not highly reasonable and natural that we should acknowledge this in his presence, and express to him our desires and our dependence upon him? Does not such acknowledgments frequently made to him naturally tend to strengthen our sense of this truth, and to make it more deeply affecting? Will any one venture to assert, that this truth is not to be thus owned? Where is the man who dares pretend to have credit and authority sufficient to controul this truth? Is not this a truth owned by angels in heaven, as well as men upon earth? Is not this a truth which shall be for ever owned by a dependent world? Besides, is not this a truth in which we are deeply interested? Is it not of the highest importance toward cultivating all other good dispositions that we have most lively impressions of this truth, and use the most natural means of making them lively? As our dependence

pendence upon God is the primary, the most important of all relations, and the foundation of all others, the deepest sense and acknowledgment of it must be our first, our supreme, our most natural, and most indispensable duty; our obligation to it can never be extinguished any other way than either by annihilating us, depriving us of our reason, or rendering us independent.

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Is it not manifest, that an intimate and habitual sense of our dependent state, has a mighty influence on all the duties which we owe to our Creator, and to one another? The strength of our love, the warmth of our gratitude to our Maker, and the stability of our confidence in him, must rise or fall, in proportion as the persuasion of our dependence upon him is fainter or stronger. And as nothing has a more powerful tendency to inspire us with love, benignity, and compassion to our fellow-creatures, than considering them as the children of the same great Parent of all, equally depending upon him with ourselves for all they enjoy here, or hope for hereafter; so nothing can more effectually check that

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pride, selfishness, and vanity, which lead us to contemn and injure our brethren of mankind, than an habitual sense that we are as really dependent creatures as they are; that we are as insufficient for our own happiness as they are; and that he on whom we depend can soon raise them to our state, or thrust us down into theirs: Why then may not this truth, most certain in itself, and most important in its consequences, be owned in the most public, religious, and affecting manner? and that, certainly, is the owning it in direct addresses to God himself. Why should we not embrace every proper opportunity of acknowledging it, with all those solemn circumstances which may contribute to imprint a deep and abiding conviction of it on our own minds, and the minds of our fellow men? But to speak more directly to the head of petitioning, it is,

Secondly, A further design of Prayer, to express, under an actual sense of the presence of God, our earnest desires of having all those sentiments and pious dispositions which it is proper for us to entertain and cultivate, considered as dependent, reasonable,

able, social, and guilty creatures. If we feel earnest breathings after happiness, after the means that lead to it, and all those pure and worthy affections which are the principal ingredients of it, we certainly ought to encourage and favour them. If then we find ardent desires arising within us after the knowledge, the favour, the resemblance, and enjoyment of God, why may we not express them in that manner, and in those circumstances, which will contribute most to cultivate and increase such honourable and worthy motions of the rational soul? And, surely, the addressing such desires to God, is the most effectual method of strengthening them. If we believe that God can accomplish these worthy desires, why may we not ask it of him? If we hope and trust in him that he will sooner or later accomplish them, why may we not declare our joyful expectations of being at last possessed of them? If we feel our souls ascending to God in love, joy, and praise, is it not reasonable that we should indulge those delightful sentiments, and, by repeated acts, confirm and improve them?

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If these inward emotions of heart are just and natural, if we cannot but approve them, if we judge them worthy of being cherished and strengthened, then why may we not give full vent to them in all proper methods of outward expression? And, if our own experience, and the testimony of the best of mankind, inform us, that the yielding up our souls to the full influences of devout affections, and giving them full scope in voice and language, especially in addresses to God, are the most effectual methods of increasing that strength and fervour, and of spreading their happy effects through the whole of human life, then it surely must be our truest wisdom to employ all these means of establishing and perfecting them.

Secondly, It is further objected, "That, " since God is infinite in goodness, he is " always disposed to bestow on his creatures " whatever is proper for them; and, since he " is infinite in wisdom, he will always " choose the fittest time, and best manner " of bestowing it. To what purpose, then, " do we entreat him to do, what he cer- " tainly will do, without any solicitation " or

“or importunity?” To this it may be answered, That, as it is not the design of Prayer to give information to our Creator of things he was not acquainted with before; so neither is it the design of *it* to move his affections, as good speakers move the hearts of their hearers, by the pathetic arts of oratory; nor to raise his pity, as beggars, by their importunities and tears, work upon the compassion of the by-standers. God is not subject to those sudden passions and emotions of mind which we feel; nor to any change of his measures and conduct by their influence: He is not wrought upon and changed by our prayers; for *with him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning*. Prayer only works its effect upon *us*, as it contributes to change the temper of *our* minds, to beget or improve right dispositions in them, to lay them open to the impressions of spiritual objects, and thus qualify us for receiving the favour and approbation of our Maker, and all those assistances which he has promised to those who call upon him in sincerity and in truth. The efficacy of Prayer does not lie in the mere asking; but in its being

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the means of producing that frame of mind which qualifies us to receive.

If it is still urged, "Why do we ask, if God does not grant merely for the asking?" To this I reply, that, if by *asking* be understood the uttering of words, and using a voice and language in which all the symptoms of earnestness and importunity appear, this external part of asking, I own, serves no purpose with respect to God; and the only use of it is, to engage the attention, and raise the devotion of our own minds, or those of others. But if by *asking* be understood the inward desires and breathings of the soul after those heavenly dispositions in which the perfection and happiness of our natures chiefly consist; in this sense of it, I assert, that these are the beginnings of virtue; these are the means of improving it, both in the nature of things, and by the positive appointment of God; these are inseparable from real virtue, as long as it is capable of improvement, which may be for ever, for any thing we know to the contrary: these desires, I say, are altogether unavoidable, and must arise in the breasts of all who have any

any degree of real goodness. Whoever has had the least glimpse of the beauty and excellence of real virtue is not satisfied with such views of it as he has already attained, but pants after a clearer and stronger view of its everlasting worth and importance. Whoever has felt that pleasing serenity, that lively joy, and delightful liberty, which arise from any considerable degree of superiority to worldly passions, longs with ardour, nay almost with impatience, to obtain an intire conquest over them; and whoever has tasted the sublime, the divine pleasures of true devotion, breathes with the greatest fervour after the full and uninterrupted enjoyment of them. To those, then, who ask why we cherish the inward desires after the heavenly graces, and study to cultivate them by Prayer, the answer is plain, that the doing so is the necessary consequence of real virtue, both in its first and feeblest, and in its highest and most perfect state, at least while in this world.

But if it should be still urged, "That, though we must have the desires, though we ought to entertain and cultivate them, yet this is no sufficient reason for our

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“ offering them up to God, and entreating
 “ him to accomplish them ; why may we
 “ not desire all the divine virtues, and fre-
 “ quently repeat the desire in our minds
 “ with pleasure and with ardour, without
 “ directly addressing it to God, whose in-
 “ finite goodness inclines him to fulfil it as
 “ soon as his unerring wisdom sees fit ?”

To this I answer, that it is impossible for the human mind to stop at the desire : it feels a powerful impulse, urging it forward to beg God to bestow what it wishes for with vehemence ; and this very argument which is urged against the lifting up holy desires to God (*viz.* that he is infinite in goodness, and willing to gratify them), is a principal motive for offering them up, and makes it impossible for a well-disposed mind to abstain from it. Since, then, there is a determination in our nature leading us to pray ; since there is a law of external revelation commanding us to pray ; since our own minds, on the calmest reflection, approve of praying, as being an explicit and natural acknowledgment of our dependence on our Maker, and a declaration that we will gratefully receive the blessings we pray
 for

for as the free gifts of his bounty; and since Prayer is a mean of enlivening and strengthening the best dispositions in our souls; we may conclude, that it is not only an innocent and harmless exercise, but that it is our indispensable duty to be frequently employed in it. SERM.
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Further, we may add to the preceding reasonings, that it is highly probable it would be neither a wise nor kind conduct in Providence to bestow heavenly wisdom, worthy dispositions, and the happiness that accompanies them, on those who neglect to own it, and who will not acknowledge their dependence upon it. Is it not highly credible, that the infinite wisdom and goodness of the great Creator of all things has established a standing law in the government of his rational subjects, that those dispositions which qualify them for his approbation and favour, shall be bestowed on none but those who sincerely humble themselves to ask them? Nay, is it not solemnly declared in the revelation God hath given us, that this is, in fact, the great law and rule of his conduct? that for these blessings *he must be sought after by the house of Israel?*

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Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm l.

15. *The Lord is nigh unto them that call upon him, and he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will hear their cry, and save them. Psalm cxlv. 18. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. James, iv. 6. The meek God will guide in judgment; and the meek will be teach his way. Psalm xxv. 9.*

Do not our own minds approve of it as a just and reasonable constitution, that the sincere, the humble, and pious petitioner should obtain his requests, while the neglecter of God, the unthinking, the proud, and unsubmitting sinner should be neglected, and continue to want what he will not humble himself to ask from the divine bounty? Nay, must it not be owned, that we can discern wise and just reasons why this should be an established law of the divine government? Is it not manifest, that sincerity, humility, and earnest desires after wisdom and virtue, are dispositions previously necessary, in the nature of things, to prepare our minds for receiving heavenly wisdom, and all the virtues which accompany

pany it? Is not a deep sense of our own ignorance, and earnest panting after the wisdom that comes from above, a fitter disposition for attaining it, than a fond conceit of our own wisdom? Is not a consciousness of the manifold disorders of our hearts, a more proper situation of mind for receiving that grace which must rectify them, than a vain and foolish imagination that all is right within already? Is not a sorrowful sense of our great loss, while we are void of those divine virtues which form the image of God in us, the most natural preparation for being beautified with them? If, then, this sincerity and humility, these ardent desires of spiritual blessings, and this deep sense of our imperfections, are naturally pre-requisite to our receiving these divine favours, is it supposable (where these previous qualifications are found in a just degree, and withal a lively persuasion that it is from God alone we can obtain these solid blessings) that the human heart can avoid flying to him for them by the most ardent invocations and prayers?

To sum up the whole argument: Since there is an inward impulse prompting us to

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pray ; since there are frequent precepts of external revelation commanding us to pray ; and since it is the established law of the righteous government of God over the intelligent world, that spiritual blessings shall be bestowed on those only who humble themselves to pray for them ; we may infer, that Prayer is so far from implying any just reflection upon the perfect wisdom and goodness of the great Governor of all things, that it is a just compliance with that constitution of things which he hath appointed, and an harmonizing (so to speak) with the wise order of his providence. Since Prayer is appointed by God to be the means of producing, preserving, and increasing in us the best and worthiest dispositions, to practise it is nothing else but a concurring with him in his great design of establishing the happiness of his creation, May God enable us all to do so. Amen,

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The former Subject continued.

MATT. xxvi. 41.

— *Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

AFTER endeavouring very shortly to explain the Nature of Prayer simply considered in itself, and to mark the principal inward acts of the mind exerted in it, from which the outward expressions of devotion ought to flow, I proposed,

Secondly, To vindicate Prayer from some objections commonly urged against it, and accordingly proceeded to state and answer two plausible objections drawn from the perfect knowledge and goodness of God, who needs no information of our wants, nor any entreaties to supply them. In

profe-

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SERM. prosecuting this branch of the subject I
 IV. now observe,

Thirdly, That it has been further urged,
 “ That there is no just ground of expecting
 “ any immediate light or aid from heaven
 “ in consequence of the most sincere and
 “ fervent Prayer; for, after the most ac-
 “ curate inquiry that can be made into the
 “ workings of the human mind, there is
 “ nothing to be perceived but what may be
 “ the natural effect of proper motives and
 “ arguments.” In answer to this, let it be
 observed, that, even supposing there is no
 good disposition awakened in the human
 soul, where the proper considerations and
 motives have not been laid before it; yet
 there may be good reasons for believing
 that there is some secret and undiscernible
 aid of Heaven concurring with those con-
 siderations and motives; displaying their
 whole importancé and force to the mind;
 fixing the attention of it to consider them;
 and laying it open to feel their whole
 power and influence. This at least must
 be allowed, that the same motives, laid be-
 fore the minds of different persons, do
 not produce the same effects; in two per-
 sons

sons who seem equally capable of discerning the strength and force of motives, who seem to have bestowed equal attention in weighing them, and whose passions seem to be equally capable of resisting them, the effects they produce are widely different.

Besides, it deserves our most attentive consideration, that there is no inseparable connection betwixt the clearest and justest views of the excellence and importance of moral and spiritual objects, and those feelings and affections of heart which correspond to them: a man may have the justest and sublimest ideas of all the human, social, and divine virtues, while he remains in a great measure, or altogether, without any feeling of them in his heart. There are many instances in the world, of men who have formed the purest and most exalted conceptions of the divine perfections, who can speak of them with dignity, and are highly delighted with the theory and contemplation of them; and yet feel almost nothing of that true devotion of heart which should be awakened by them. In like manner, a man may have his mind
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stored with the most exact and delightful speculations concerning the beauty and worth of temperance, integrity, sincerity, benevolence, friendship, humility, and all the human and social virtues; may be capable of speaking and writing about them to admiration; while he still continues under the power of the lowest sensuality, and a selfish malignant disposition. On the other hand, it may be observed, that some of those who are less acquainted with the delightful theories of virtue and religion, who have not such exact and perfect notions of them, and who, from a necessary attention to other things, are seldom employed in thinking on them, yet are more uniformly governed in life by the natural influence of the pious and virtuous dispositions themselves, than the greatest philosopher or divine who spends his days in contemplating the ideas of them, and those views of things which should excite them. Now, as it is the good dispositions themselves that constitute the soul and essence of virtue, as they only give the true dignity to our minds and beauty to our lives, as they only can form the character which is
worthy

worthy and acceptable in the sight of God ; SERM.
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so they are always represented in Scripture
as the fruits and effects of the Holy Spirit.
Gal. v. 22, 23. *The fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,
goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*

From these observations it plainly appears, that after we have got the purest and clearest ideas of religion, and the fullest views of those motives which should engage us to the practice of it, there is still ground to pray, that God may bless us with those divine affections of heart, which are the only real ornaments to our souls, the only lasting foundations of their peace and happiness. Our ideas are but pictures and images of the things themselves; and as the picture of a feast cannot satisfy our hunger, nor the picture of a fire warm and enlighten us; so the finest ideas of virtue and religion cannot make us good and happy without those dispositions of heart, which should be raised and kept alive by them.

It may be also observed, as a thing of very considerable importance in the present argument, that the power of a man over
his

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his own inward dispositions, or those of others, is not so great as some seem to imagine. No man will venture to boast that he can by any one effort, how vigorous soever, or even by repeated efforts, resolutions, and endeavours, raise the virtuous dispositions in his own soul to such a degree of strength, that they shall uniformly and constantly prevail over all the passions which may oppose them : far less can any one pretend that it is in his power to form anew the hearts of others, and change their dispositions from the worst to the best at his pleasure. Excepting our Saviour himself, no infallible teacher of virtue, no perfect master of the divine art of forming the noblest and worthiest dispositions in the human mind, ever appeared in the world. The wisest, the best, and tenderest parent cannot, by all his art and most assiduous endeavours, bestow true virtue on his dearest child ; the most learned, most virtuous, and affectionate tutor cannot form it in his beloved pupil. If an infallibly successful teacher of virtue could be found anywhere, what an invaluable treasure would he be, and how worthy to be

be sought after in the remotest corners of the world! No doubt, when one reads pious books, hears virtuous discourse, sees worthy examples, and has enjoyed the benefit of the finest instructions, he may, or rather he must, be furnished with the justest and most amiable ideas of the whole glorious train of virtues; but it will not follow hence that he must have such a relish for the virtues themselves as shall constantly render him superior to the temptations of the world; or even, on the whole, make him a man of a virtuous character.

This doctrine, of the inability of mankind to make themselves virtuous and happy, and of the need of assistance from above in this divine work, has been so deeply felt by the more thinking and considerate part of them, that it extorted a confession of it even from those whose speculative principles seemed to lead them to a denial of it. For we find that sect of the heathen philosophers who laid the foundation of their system in the distinction betwixt things in our power and out of our power (meaning by the former, our good dispositions, resolutions, and actions; and by the latter,

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latter, the external enjoyments of the world, which depend on a thousand accidents over which we have no command); even they, I say, in opposition to their favourite distinction, inculcated the usefulness and importance of Prayer*.

To all these observations we may add, that there has always been a very general and strong propensity in mankind to believe, that God makes impressions on the minds of men in an immediate manner. And of this it were easy to bring numberless proofs from the poets, philosophers, orators, and historians, of former ages. I am very sensible that it will be objected, that few pretend that they themselves have felt any foreign and divine influence which they could certainly distinguish from the natural and ordinary operations of their own minds; but to this one may reply, that it may be the peculiar excellence of the Deity's method of operation, that it is imperceptible in itself, and only discernible by its effects. Thus, though we do not feel the power of God upholding us in life,

* Marcus Antoninus, Book ix. and Simplicius's Commentary on Epictetus, at the end.

yet

yet we do not know but it may be as really exerted every moment, in supporting our being, as it was at first in bringing us into it. Besides, it may be said that many good men, quite free of superstition, and remarkable for strength of mind, have declared that they have felt secret and sudden influences, determining them to particular steps of conduct, which had very remarkable effects, as to the happiness and usefulness of their after-life; and does not almost every one feel thoughts, resolutions, and designs, springing up within him, which he is not conscious he has been led to by any former course of his reading, conversation, or reasoning? Nay, if there is any credit to be given to human testimony, must we not believe that intimations have been made to good men, of future events, which greatly concerned themselves, or the society to which they belonged?

To conclude: Those who will not allow any immediate influence of the Deity upon the human mind, but ascribe every thing there to the natural force of arguments and motives, ought to consider that it is only

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going one step farther, and they come to God, and must own him as the original author of all. It is God who has made the mind of man capable of perceiving motives, and of being wrought upon by them: it is God who, in the course of his providence, has presented such a train of motives to any one's mind as has engaged him to practise all the virtues of a holy life: to God, therefore, the praise of it is to be given. And there still remains abundant reason to pray to him, that he may, in the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of his providence, continue to present such views of things to the mind, as may determine it always to chuse the virtuous and worthy part.

Fourthly. But should any one object in this manner (which I believe will scarcely be done by any considerate man), waving the debate about the aids which may be obtained by Prayer, yet alleging that he has no need of it: "What should I pray for? Shall I pray that God may enlighten my mind with the knowledge of my duty, and make me perceive the excellence and importance of piety, sincerity, truth, integrity,

“tegrity, charity, and all those virtues
“which dignify the souls of men, and
“beautify their lives and manners? I
“know all these things already, and con-
“duct my life by them.”

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How much is it to be wished that every one, who thinks or speaks in this manner, would seriously ask himself—Have I already attained as clear and distinct views of the worth and importance of all the heavenly virtues as are attainable by mankind? Have they as sovereign and commanding an influence over my heart and life as ever they had over any of the sons of men? Am I sure there is nothing farther to be seen, nothing higher to be felt? What if human nature is capable of stronger and brighter views of the worth and majesty of the great virtues of the spiritual life than I have yet obtained? Nay, may I not suppose that many of the children of men have actually attained them, and conducted their lives more unerringly under the power and influence of them? Have I any ambition remaining? any thing of that divine ambition of aiming at a transcendancy in what is great and good, in what is the sole glory of a rea-

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sonable being? Shall I not then aspire after the highest sense, and the strongest impression of them, that my nature is capable of? Is there a great Father of lights, the enlightener of all minds, the everlasting lover and friend of truth and righteousness? Has he declared that he is ready and willing to enlighten those who ask wisdom from him? Has he assured us, that there is a dispensation of grace and light carrying on in the world by his Son and Holy Spirit, by which those blessings are perpetually imparted to all who sincerely ask them? Has he already enlightened, in a superior manner, those souls which lay themselves open to his influence? And shall I refuse to ask his heavenly wisdom, and live contented with a smaller portion of it when a greater may be obtained? Surely, no true lover of virtue, no one who has any real greatness of mind, can bear the thought.

But, perhaps, the objector will reply:
 "What though I have not the highest and
 "most striking sense of the everlasting
 "worth and beauty of these things; yet
 "I have as just and strong a sense of them
 "as is sufficient for all the purposes of hu-
 "man

“man life; as much as will enable me to
“withstand the temptations of the world,
“and render me superior to them. I am
“so thoroughly persuaded of the excellence
“and value of all the moral and divine vir-
“tues, that I am in no danger of being
“seduced into a forgetfulness of the duties
“which I owe to God, to mankind, or
“to myself. I have such a perfect abhor-
“rence of every thing base and unworthy,
“of every thing that approaches to a de-
“parture from what is just, becoming, and
“honest in human life, that it will be an
“everlasting security to my virtue; or if
“at any time, through the force of some
“great and sudden temptations, I should
“be guilty of some small failure, I have
“nothing more to do but call up the
“strength and resolution of my mind, and
“all things shall be right again.” In an-
swer to all this, in the first place it may be
observed that, supposing all that true which
vain men represent to their own conceited
minds, though there should be no need
for Prayer; yet, surely, there is the justest
ground for another part of devotion, thank-
fulness, and praise. Is it not reasonable,

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that those persons should lift up their hearts and hands in gratitude to that God who has hitherto preserved them from the temptations of the world, and enabled them to lead a blameless life? Is it not God who made them capable of discerning the honest, the just, and worthy part, and enabled them to follow it? Is it not God who planted the good dispositions in their hearts, and has not suffered them to be overcome by the contrary passions? Can any blessing be greater, or afford juster ground for the most sincere praise and thankfulness? Nay, can any thing be more reasonable, than that they should pray to Heaven with the greatest sincerity for the continuance of such an inestimable blessing? Are we not always depending on the providence of God for it? To how many diseases and accidents are we exposed, which no human wisdom can foresee or prevent, by which the strength of our minds may be exceedingly impaired, our tempers fretted and soured, nay our rational powers entirely destroyed? But, farther,

Allow me, in the second place, to exhort and beseech those, if there are any such, who

who imagine they have maintained their integrity invariably through the whole course of their lives (without the assistance of Prayer, or any acts of trust and confidence in God), to take an attentive review of their whole past conduct, and compare it impartially with the purity and perfection of the divine law, and then let them honestly declare if they have discerned nothing otherwise than it ought to have been. Will any one venture to assert, that upon the strictest examination he finds he has not departed from the great rule of what is worthy and good, and that in many instances; or, that he is not conscious to himself of having neglected many things he ought to have done, or might have done, to render either himself or others wiser, better, or happier? Do not many things occur to him, in the survey of his whole life, which he disapproves, which he would not chuse to be guilty of a second time, and which he would endeavour to amend if he were to pass life over again? I am inclined to believe there is no man who, upon looking back, will not be sensible he has thought, said, and done, many things

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things which he would not chuse to do over again were he placed in the same circumstances; that he has omitted, foolishly and criminally omitted, to do many things which he would now joyfully embrace an opportunity of performing, if the like circumstances should present themselves. May it not be further asked, How do you know but that, if you had been fervent in Prayer, and with true devotion had lifted up your desires to God for conduct and direction, you might have been preserved from those crimes, and those omissions of duty, which you cannot now review without regret and self-condemnation, and been led to the practice of many virtues, and performance of many good offices, the opportunities of which can never be recalled?

May we not further inquire of those who have such complacency and satisfaction in their own characters and conduct—Do you find nothing in the present temper and disposition of your mind which you have reason to complain of, and which you desire to have rectified? Are there no imperfections to be corrected, no virtuous affections to be refined, confirmed, strengthened, and perfected?

perfected? Are you already possessed of that degree of love to God and true virtue, which pervades the whole soul, controls the power of all the inferior passions, establishes a perpetual serenity within, and animates you with the utmost joy and alacrity in practising all the virtues of a worthy life? If ye imagine ye are already raised to the utmost summit of perfection, we may safely venture to assert that ye are mistaken; and that self-love has blinded your eyes, and made you pass too favourable a sentence upon yourselves. This fond imagination, that ye are already perfect, is almost a demonstration that ye are yet at a very great distance from it; ye have certainly fixed too low a standard of religion; your intellectual eye is not quick and piercing enough to discern the idea of perfection set before you in the law of God, which ye ought perpetually to have in your view, and to be aspiring after with the utmost ardour. There are but few to be found who have attained to the justest and highest taste of the true sublime in heart and life: whoever has had a clear and distinct view of it will not flatter himself that he

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he has reached it; nay, he will be fully sensible that he has not yet approached near it; and whoever fondly imagines that he is come up to it, has not distinctly perceived it. That man must have a low understanding and a vain heart, who is thus satisfied with himself; who fancies he has attained to the truly great and perfect in temper and conduct: and whoever is thus easily satisfied with himself is commonly the only person who is so; or, at least, the number of those will be few who pass the same judgment on him that he does on himself. The higher any one advances in religion, his views are proportionably opened and enlarged. That moment the virtuous man has gained the victory over some bad passion he has been long struggling with, he sees some other one not quite subdued within him; and that moment he reaches to some certain pitch of virtue he had in his view, he discerns some higher pitch of it at a great distance from him: in this he resembles a traveller in a large campaign country, who, this hour, sees nothing beyond a small eminence, which terminates his view at a distance, the top of which

which he no sooner gains, than a new extent of country fills his eye equal to that he has already passed. Since, then, there is still something yet unattained in the spiritual life, can we restrain ourselves from praying that the God of grace, the author of every good and perfect gift, would enlighten our eyes to discern it, and inspire us with the divine ambition of aiming and endeavouring to obtain it? Is it not a joyful, nay a triumphant consideration, that, by the light and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God, we may travel on, from perfection to perfection, and approach nearer and nearer to our Maker, by higher degrees of resemblance?

Further, may we not desire those who imagine they have no need of Prayer, to look forward to that part of life they may yet have to pass through? Are they certain they shall never meet with any temptation that may be an overmatch for that virtue of theirs which they flatter themselves is so firmly established? May there not be ten thousand circumstances in life which may endanger their integrity? Every occurrence, every state, every employment,
has

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has its peculiar temptations, and may occasion a departure from the right path. What security have we in ourselves? Are we not conscious that our reason is weak, in many things clouded by ignorance, blinded by prejudices, seduced by appetites, and over-ruled by passions and unreasonable affections? When we look abroad into the world, how many melancholy instances may we mark out of the seemingly firmest virtue, soon shaken and overcome? Must we not own that wiser, greater, and better men than we can pretend to be, have yielded to the force of temptation; and in some degree and for some time, apostatised from the cause of righteousness? Have not they themselves mournfully acknowledged it, afterwards? Can any then be so insufferably vain and arrogant as to imagine that nothing can ever lead them astray, or in any degree darken their understandings, or corrupt their hearts? Is it not most natural for every one who loves the good and virtuous part, and delights in the practice of it, to wish that he may have the assistance of a superior guide to conduct him safely through all the snares which may be spread

spread for him in a degenerate world? In a word, every one who is thoroughly sensible of his own weakness, and of the innumerable dangers to which virtue is exposed in the present disordered state of things, will see sufficient reason for lifting up his soul to God in these emphatical prayers of the devout Psalmist, Psalm cxix: 33—37. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way.*

To all which it may be added, that, if ever any person appeared in the world who could plead that he had no need of Prayer, Jesus Christ might have done it: He felt a perpetual good-will to all mankind, and was animated by it to go about in an uniform and unwearied course of beneficence; he was quite unmoved with the temptations of the world, and walked on in the execution

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tion of his great undertaking with an undaunted and victorious pace, in spite of all opposition; and yet we learn from the history of his life, that he was frequently employed in Prayer, as well as recommended it to his followers: surely then, no one else can pretend that he is above the need of Prayer, and other acts of devotion.

Again: "It is objected that, whatever
" use Prayer may be of for direction and
" assistance in the paths of virtue, it surely
" can be of none for the obtaining the par-
" don of sin, and deliverance from those
" punishments which are threatened to be
" inflicted on sinners in this and an eternal
" world: for if sin deserves punishment,
" and if punishment is necessary to frighten
" us from continuing in it, how can Prayers
" for forgiveness secure us from those suf-
" ferings which are intended by our kind
" Creator for our reformation and amend-
" ment?" To this it may be answered,
that a sense of our faults, humble confes-
sion of them, and earnest entreating the
divine mercy to forgive them, are very
proper means of promoting a penitent dis-
position

position in us; they naturally anticipate the necessity of punishments destined for our reformation, as by them we in a gentler manner attain to the end of such punishments without having suffered them: and thus Prayers for the pardon of sin may be of unspeakable advantage, as they contribute to produce that temper of mind in us which leads to an alteration in our conduct, and consequently secures us from those punishments which must have ensued either on our past transgressions, or on our persisting in the like course of iniquity.

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Before we finish this head, it may be proper to observe, that others argue against praying for the pardon of sin in another manner: "What occasion can there possibly be (say they) for praying to God to forgive our sins? our sins are owing to the invincible force of temptations, and so are only the unavoidable frailties of our nature; and surely an infinitely good God can never call us to a severe account for them." As this is an important matter, on which our highest and eternal interest depends, it greatly concerns us to take care that we do not deceive our-

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selves: Let us attend to the voice of revelation and of reason, and we shall find that they jointly proclaim, with the highest solemnity, that sin shall not pass unpunished: Harken to that awful declaration of Holy Writ, Gal. vi. 7. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting; that is, our everlasting state hereafter depends upon our behaviour here.* As surely as he who sows wheat or barley in the seed-time shall reap the same kind of grain in the harvest, and no other; so certainly shall those who live a wicked life here be miserable hereafter. Is it not amazing that mankind are not struck with this tremendous declaration? The reason of this must be, that they do not in earnest believe it. Every man believes that if he sows the seeds of thistles and thorns, he cannot reap wheat or barley; but every one does not believe that if he lives a vicious and impious life here, he cannot enjoy happiness hereafter. What is the reason why we believe the former, and
doubt

doubt of the latter, since they are equally true? One reason is plainly this; that we have observed the course of nature in the frequent returns of seed-time and harvest, and find, by undoubted experience, that it is an invariable law of the natural world, that whatever kind of grain is sown, the same kind, and no other, is reaped in the harvest. But we have not yet seen one whole year, one full period of the government of the rational world: we have only seen the seed-time of human life; the harvest is yet to come; the great year is not completed, at least within our view; but as soon as we enter into the invisible world, we shall be convinced that it is an unalterable law of the moral as well as of the natural world, that whatever a man sows that he also reaps; there we shall see what dreadful misery springs out of vice, and what further punishments are inflicted on it; what unspeakable happiness grows out of virtue, and with what additional joy it is crowned.

But, further, let us consider, that though we had not those solemn declarations of divine revelation, we should have just rea-

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son to dread the consequences of criminal indulgence both in this and in an after-state. For, when we attend to the conduct of Divine Providence, we see that vice is actually punished at present in a certain degree, which gives natural ground to fear that it may be punished in an higher degree hereafter. The natural deformity of vice, the pangs of remorse which accompany it, the havoc which it makes of the beauty, the order, and peace of our minds, the direful effects of it on the bodies, fortunes, families, and characters of those who indulge themselves in it without control, plainly intimate, or rather loudly proclaim, that the Governor of the world is engaged against it, and will not suffer it to pass unpunished. Now has the great Author of nature begun to chastise and punish sin here; and what ground is there then to hope that he will favour it hereafter? What shadow of reason is there for flattering ourselves that the measures and laws of divine conduct shall be altered? The other world is only a succeeding period of the same government under the same Governor, in which we have all possible reason to be-

lieve

lieve that the same fundamental laws of re-
warding virtue and punishing vice shall con-
tinue in full force. It certainly then greatly
concerns us, not to cherish an indifference
and fearlessness with regard to what may
be hereafter under the righteous govern-
ment of God. To think or speak in a
slight and unconcerned manner as to what
may happen in any period of the Divine
government, is unspeakable irreverence and
manifest impiety; but to live at random,
without regarding the Divine law, and the
tremendous sanctions of it, is madness and
impiety, to such a pitch as must astonish
and strike every thinking person with ter-
ror. Let us beware then of trusting to
mistaken notions of the boundless benig-
nity and mercy of the great Parent of all.
Do we allow that it is consistent with the
most perfect goodness to inflict just punish-
ments on wickedness here (and allow it we
must, for we see that in fact it is done);
by what train of reasoning, then, shall we
be able to show, that it is inconsistent with
the same perfect goodness to punish it with
greater severity hereafter?

SERM.

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Fifthly,

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Fifthly, It is objected, "That those who seem to delight in Prayer do not appear to be better, happier, or more successful, than those who neglect or condemn it. Where do we find God interposing for the prosperity of the pious, or where are those happy effects of devotion we are taught to expect?"—In answer to this, it may be observed, that there are different sorts of persons who pray from very different views and intentions; some pray with no other nor higher view than that they may gain a character as religious, which may be of use to them in the prosecution of some worldly design; others use Prayer as a kind of charm, to render them acceptable to God, or as an atonement and compensation to him for those lusts of their hearts which they are unwilling to mortify, and those iniquities of their lives which they still continue to commit. Now both these sorts of praying people are to be thrown out of the question; and it is to be confined to those who pray with simplicity and sincerity of heart, who have no other aim in praying but that they may become better

better men, that they may know the will of God more clearly, and may obey it with more constancy and alacrity, and who trust in God that he *will be to them a sun and shield, will give them grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from them, because they walk uprightly.*

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If it be asked, What the better are such persons for their habitual course of Prayer and other acts of devotion? The answer is plain, that though they are not perhaps distinguished with outward prosperity, yet they are rewarded with inward enjoyments of a higher and nobler kind. What though God has not bestowed houses, lands, riches, pleasures, honour, strength, or beauty, upon the pious man; these are only outward good things, incapable of giving true happiness to the possessors of them. But if he has given him greater blessings, wisdom, virtue, truth, integrity, temperance, humility, meekness, contentment, and contempt of the world, with all that inward peace, joy, confidence in himself, and hope of immortality, which accompany them; these are the true riches, the real treasures of the immortal soul; these are such treasures as calamity, danger,

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death,

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death, can never rob it of. It is true these inward pleasures, these mental possessions, are not discerned by spectators; but those who feel and enjoy them, cannot doubt of their superior worth and excellence. As it is well known that many of those who put on an air of happiness, and whose outward splendour and flourishing circumstances create admiration and envy in ignorant beholders, carry about with them secret pains and inward stings, which greatly diminish, if not entirely destroy, their apparent happiness and contentment; so it is as certain, that the sincere worshippers of God, even when in the lowest state and most struggling circumstances, enjoy many silent pleasures and secret consolations, which give them greater happiness than worldly men ever taste amidst their greatest gaiety and abundance. He who is conscious that he possesses, in the main, that temper and disposition of mind which is acceptable to God, and who maintains an assured trust and confidence in the mercy and goodness of his Creator, enjoys an inward rest and composure of mind, which cannot be described. It is called in Holy Scripture, *the*
peace

peace of God that passeth all understanding. SERM.

It is an inward calmness and tranquillity, IV.
like to that of the highest heavens. He
that enjoys it is easy within himself, and
pleasing to those around him. He is free
from those inward disturbances and anxie-
ties which disquiet the souls of other men.
His conversation is pleasant, and his tran-
quillity appears in the cheerful air of his
countenance, though silent; his mind is
open to taste with full relish all those good
things which Providence has provided for
sweetening the journey of human life.

But why do I call this happy state of
mind tranquillity only?—it is far beyond
mere calmness or tranquillity.—There may
be a perfect tranquillity and calmness in the
air, though the day be overcast with thick
mists and clouds. The state of the pious
man's mind is like a calm and serene day,
enlightened and enlivened with the brightest
sunshine. The truly devout man is not
barely content with his lot, acting the part
assigned him, however low it may be, to
the best of his power; his soul rises up
above contentment, to joyful thankfulness
and praise. He rejoices in that existence

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into which he has lately entered, and in that rank of creatures to which he is advanced. When he considers that he is admitted to be a spectator of the glorious works of nature around him, and that he is not only made capable of contemplating the beauty and order, the grandeur and magnificence of them, but of adoring, praising, resembling, and enjoying the great Creator and Sustainer of them, he is transported with wonder, gratitude, and praise. If these are my enjoyments (says he to himself) in this first stage of my existence, when my faculties are only beginning to open and unfold themselves, what new scenes, what nobler and more magnificent entertainments may I expect shall be presented to my view, while my faculties are improving and enlarging through millions of ages! What divine, what inconceivable joys, must break in upon me, if I should be admitted to survey all the bright and illustrious scenes of Providence in many other parts of God's great dominions, and through all the successive periods of his righteous government! But what must my state be, when I shall see my Maker himself, *not darkly, as through a glass,*

glass, but face to face!—Here language, imagination fail me.—Sure I am, it must be something that will be a fountain of unspeakable delight and everlasting rapture. *Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, those great things God hath laid up in store for them that love him.*

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The last objection I shall take notice of, is this, "That Prayer can be of no importance; for since all things are already fixed by an unalterable decree of God, all those whom he has determined to be good and happy shall certainly be so whether they pray or not." In answer to this, let it be observed, that none ever maintained that God hath determined events to happen without any means. Now we have shewn that Prayers are the proper means of obtaining spiritual blessings. If, therefore, we desire the spiritual blessings absolutely necessary to our happiness, we must as earnestly incline to the use of all the necessary means to prepare ourselves for receiving these blessings; since they are not ordinarily appointed, but to such as are thus properly prepared to receive and improve them.

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them. Does any one ever pretend to reason thus: If it be decreed that I shall be wise and learned, I shall undoubtedly become so, though I should never converse, read, think, or exercise my understanding in any way? Did ever any one seriously expect he would arrive at knowledge and wisdom by the mere force of an eternal decree, while he rejected all the means of attaining it? Did ever the husbandman sit down and reason thus with himself: If it be determined in the eternal decree of God that I shall have a plentiful crop, I shall certainly reap it in the harvest, though I neither manure nor sow my field in the seed-time? Now, so far as Prayer is the mean of rendering us virtuous and happy, it is as absurd to expect we shall arrive at virtue and happiness without it, as it would be for the husbandman to hope he shall have his usual crop, though he bestow none of his usual labour and industry.

To conclude this head of the discourse; it may be proper to remark, that after all that mankind can do to reason themselves into a persuasion of the uselessness and absurdity

furdity of devotion, there is still something within them too strong, too mighty, for all their pretended demonstrations to conquer. The foundation for devotion is laid so deep in the human mind, that the utmost art and laboured endeavours of a whole life cannot craze it. There are certain circumstances and situations of affairs in which nature will break forth, and shew its force to be superior to all artificial reasonings; there are, I say, such circumstances in the course of almost every one's life, as will oblige the most hardened neglecter or contemner of Prayer to lift up his soul to God with the utmost fervour. There are many such circumstances; but, as it would take up too much time to describe them all, we shall only mention a few of them.—When one is reduced to the utmost extremity of distress, under the pressure of some great affliction; when relations, friends, physicians, stand around, but cannot give any relief, or administer any consolation; where is the man to be found whose speculative opinions can then maintain their power over him, and restrain him from looking up unto God, and imploring aid and relief from him?

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him? In all cases too of sudden and extreme danger, do not we see how naturally men fly to God, and invoke him with the utmost fervency to help and deliver them? In like manner, when the poor, the weak, the friendless man, is sorely wronged, and grievously oppressed by the great and powerful ones of the earth, and sees no possible way of redress from men, does he not call upon the great Judge of all to protect the injured, and plead his righteous cause? Again, when grievous crimes are laid to an honest man's charge, of which he is entirely innocent, especially when accompanied with such circumstances of probability, as that his friends, and those who are inclined to judge most favourably of him, cannot help suspecting that he is guilty, does he not then naturally appeal to the all-seeing and unerring Judge, and entreat him to vindicate his innocence, and clear his good name? These things are felt in mankind by a sudden impulse of nature without any deliberate reflection. Beside these instances, we may take notice of the two following: *First*, When any one is about to leave the world, and bid an everlasting farewell to all the

the enjoyments of it, when all hope of restoration to health, or even of prolonging life in a lingering disease, is taken away, is there any one who can then abstain from praying that the great and good Being, who brought him into the world, and led him through all the different stages of life, may continue his providential care, conduct him safely into the untried world of spirits, and be his guide through all the periods of his existence? And, *secondly*, When any one stands by and sees the expiring agonies of his dearest friend, for whom he felt the warmest love and the highest esteem, in whom he reposed an unreserved confidence; when he sees that all those talents, virtues, and excellencies, which delighted his soul, are soon to cease as to this world, can he help wishing and praying, with the utmost ardour, that such a soul, with all its virtues and accomplishments, may survive the dissolution of his mortal body, and that he may enjoy his delightful society in another and better situation of things, where there shall be no danger of death and separation any more?

But

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But why do I insist on these particular alarming circumstances as the only proofs that mankind are determined, by the very frame of their nature, to have recourse to Almighty God? For as soon as the faculties of the reasonable soul begin to open and unfold, it appears to be in a posture (I had almost said, in an act) of devotion. Do not we see all mankind breathing after knowledge and happiness? Do not they all pursue truth and happiness, however far mistaken they may be as to the kind of it? This ardent desire in the human soul is so natural, so essential to it, that perhaps there cannot be a juster or better definition given of it, than that it is a rational being panting for knowledge and happiness. It must be owned, that these breathings of the soul (after truth and felicity) are not directed immediately to God, nor explicitly expressed in words; and yet as there is no notion or conclusion of reason more natural or obvious to the soul than its dependence on God, and that he is the sovereign dispenser of its lot, the source from which all its excellency or happiness must flow,

Prayers are its most natural exercise, and even these instinctive desires may justly be called natural Prayers. They discover a plain tendency of the soul towards God, the eternal fountain of light and happiness; they are sure indications that there is some idea of truth and happiness inseparable from the human mind, and that there is a natural instinct in it which leads all men to seek after and pursue some species or another of good, and even to implore it from God.

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From all these observations and reasonings, it is hoped, we may conclude, that the neglecting or contemning of Prayer must be owing to prejudices, cherished and fortified with art and care, and not to any dictate of reason, or impartial inquiry into the state and tendency of the several workings of the human mind. But, after all that can be said in justification of Prayer, we must acknowledge, that it is rather by the pure and refined feelings of a well-disposed heart, that any one can be brought to a full conviction of the worth and importance of this part of religion, than by the force of argument, which, at best, can only extort the cold assent of the understanding, or silence its vain reasonings.

S E R M O N V.

The Usefulness and Advantages of Prayer.

MATT. xxvi. 41.

—*Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

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THE former Discourses were employed in explaining the nature of Prayer, and attempting to remove various prejudices which have been imbibed, and objections which have been urged, against this fundamental part of religion. Let me now proceed to

The Third and last general thing proposed, namely, To point out the advantages which arise from the sincere and stedfast performance of this important duty. And here,

In the *first* place, when we take the most general view of Prayer, we cannot help discerning the usefulness and importance of it.

it. When we consider that mankind, in their present state, are deeply immersed in the business or enjoyments of the world; that external objects are perpetually striking upon their senses, playing before their imaginations, and making impressions upon their hearts, it evidently appears to be an unspeakable advantage to them to have regular and stated seasons of recalling their minds from the numberless avocations of a vain world, and fixing them upon God and spiritual things. The surest method of counterworking the impressions made on the soul by that crowd of worldly thoughts which pass through it, is to banish them entirely for some time, and lay it open by Prayer and contemplation to the impressions of those heavenly and eternal objects, which, by their greatness, importance, and excellence, will engage and command attention. And, indeed, without proper seasons allotted to retirement and devotion, and frequently recurring, we are in the greatest danger imaginable of being under the full and uncontrolled power of those vain and perishing objects which surround us in the world, and which are perpetually engaging the

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attention of our minds, and soliciting the love and affection of our hearts. Our Saviour, in the words of the text, takes notice of this as one great advantage of Prayer, that it is a preservative against the temptations of the world. *Pray (says he), that ye enter not into temptation.*

Now Prayer has a natural tendency, in a great variety of ways, to break the force of those temptations to which we are necessarily exposed in life. It keeps alive in our minds an habitual sense of our danger, disposes us to keep a watchful eye on those things from which our danger arises, and puts us in a proper posture for resistance and defence.—It turns away our attention (as has just now been observed) from those objects which raise impure desires and guilty passions in our bosoms.—It calls up such a lively sense of the Divine presence, as must check the first risings of irregular inclinations, and fill us with dread and shame of thinking, saying, or doing any thing unworthy of those who aim at the approbation and favour of the great Judge of all.—It presents the Divine perfections to our view, and inspires us with an abhor-

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rence of every thing that would render us unlike to them. Whenever therefore we are assaulted with a temptation to gratify any impure and violent appetite or passion, let us accustom ourselves to stop till we have lifted up our hearts to God in sincere and fervent Prayer, that he may assist us in the conflict, and give us the victory; and we shall soon feel the violence of the temptation abated,—that we are enabled to exert a hidden strength, and, for the present, to obtain an entire mastery over it.

Secondly. As Prayer fortifies us against temptations to sin, so it inspires us with the love, and animates us to the practice, of every virtue. By offering up our most earnest desires to God, that he may more and more beautify our souls with all worthy and good dispositions, our love to them is increased; and we are the more disposed to employ every proper mean of establishing and strengthening them in our hearts.—When we pray that the venerable image of our Maker may be stamped upon us, the divine perfections are necessarily presented to our view and contemplation, our love and admiration of them is heightened, and

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we are fired with the noble ambition of drawing nearer and nearer to them by greater degrees of resemblance.—When we contemplate the deformity and misery of vice, under the actual sense of the presence of God, and intreat him to preserve us from it, we cannot but look upon it with the highest indignation, and form the most steadfast resolutions to abandon it.—When we view the beauty of holiness, as our Creator's glory, and lift up our souls to him in ardent prayers, to adorn us with it, we must feel our hearts warmed with the love of it, and lay ourselves under the strongest vows of adhering uniformly and invariably to it through the whole course of our lives. When we give full vent to the ardent breathings of our souls after the love of God, gratitude to him, and confidence in him, these pious affections are immediately awakened, and strengthened in some degree in our hearts: and when we indulge ourselves in frequent and ardent prayers for the prosperity and welfare of our fellow-creatures, this exercise of the kind and benevolent affections contributes greatly to enliven and invigorate them.

Moreover,

Moreover, those views in which Prayer presents our brethren of mankind to our minds, tend greatly to soften our hearts and heighten our good-will and tenderness for them; when we consider them as a part of the same great family of God with ourselves, as partakers of the same nature, as liable to all the same dangers and distresses, as groaning under the same darkness of understanding, disorder of heart, and violence of passion, it will be impossible for us not to love and pity them with the greatest tenderness, and pray with the utmost ardour that they may be at last established in some better and happier state.

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Thirdly. Prayer puts us into the best frame and situation of mind for receiving the influences of heavenly light and grace. It promotes a certain softness and tenderness of heart, which renders the soul easily susceptible of the impressions of spiritual and divine objects. The soul, when duly softened and humbled by Prayer, feels and sees in quite another manner than when it is hardened and puffed up with pride and vanity. A deep sense of our ignorance disposes us to attend to, and follow every

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ray of light, how small soever; whereas pride of understanding shuts out the light, and turns away the attention from it. We should therefore consider Prayer, and exercise ourselves in it, as the great means appointed by God for drawing down that wisdom from above, which is necessary to guide us to our higher country, and to settle us in eternal rest and happiness in our Father's house. See, for the proof of this, many solemn passages of Holy Scripture, James, iv. 6. Psalm xxv. 9. Isa. lxvi. 2.

Fourthly. True devotion raises the human soul to an uncommon pitch of grandeur and elevation. The mind of man seems to adapt itself to the different nature of the objects with which it is conversant; it is contracted and debased by being employed in little and low things, and it is proportionably enlarged and exalted by the contemplation of those things which are great and sublime. The perfections of the Deity, his universal and eternal providence, the excellence of virtue, and of those general laws of God which are the foundation and support of the order, the beauty, and

and happiness of his whole rational kingdom; the dignity and immortality of the human soul, whereby it is capable of vast and endless improvements; these are objects of such a striking and exalted nature, that they must ennoble and enlarge the mind employed in contemplating them. All worldly and transitory things must appear unworthy the love and pursuit of that soul which is raised above all created things, and which aspires to, and pursues that happiness which arises from the love, the resemblance, and enjoyment of the great Creator of all. There is no greatness of mind equal to that which springs from the divine ambition of aiming at a resemblance of God, and from the glorious hope of seeing him as he is, in some future period of existence. *Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* 1 John, iii. 2.

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Fifthly. True devotion gives a wonderful strength and firmness to the soul which is under the full power and influence of it. That man must adhere with inviolable con-

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fancy to whatever is great or good in life, who is animated with the hope of the Divine approbation, and who relies with assured confidence on the friendship, protection, and assistance of the great Ruler of all things. No difficulties, no dangers, can terrify *him* who has that great Being on his side, the sole, the sovereign Disposer of all events. No temptations of pleasure or profit can allure him who trusts in an almighty Friend able to make him happy, in ten thousand methods, beyond what he can conceive. Every worldly thing vanishes at the presence of him, *before whom the world is as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity.* Even death itself is stripped of all its terrors to the pious man, when it is considered only as a removing that veil of flesh which interposes betwixt him and the invisible world: nay, death itself is desirable, as it discloses new scenes of wonder and delight, and admits the devout soul to the more immediate presence of its God, *where there are rivers of pleasures for evermore.*

Since then Prayer is a reasonable thing in itself, since there are so many and so great advantages arising from the sincere
and

and steadfast practice of it, it must be both SERM.
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our duty and our interest to continue *instant in it.* And that we may be animated with fervour and sincerity in the exercise of this part of our duty, let us frequently inculcate on ourselves, that we are weak, indigent, and ignorant creatures, and that we depend entirely on our Maker for all we possess at present, or hope to enjoy hereafter. The first and most obvious reflection convinces us that we are nothing of ourselves, but that it is by the power of God we have our existence. No man was ever so presumptuous and absurd as to imagine or assert that he was author and original to himself, and that he felt a mighty power by which he brought himself into being, and could continue himself in it as long as he pleased. Every one acknowledges that he finds nothing in his own nature to warrant his subsistence in this world for one moment, and far less to ensure it for ever in another.

Nay, even supposing our existence continued to us by that almighty Being who gave it, we are conscious that we cannot conduct ourselves surely to that state of perfection

SERM. perfection and happiness which our natures
V. are capable of, and for which they were designed. When we have viewed ourselves on all sides, we find we are in the most forlorn and helpless condition imaginable without the friendship of a superior and almighty Being. In order to represent our deplorable state without a firm reliance on the all-sustaining and all-conducting providence of our great Creator, let us suppose that, in a morning when we awake, we should find ourselves sailing along, with all our nearest relations and dearest friends, in a wide, unconstant, and seemingly boundless ocean, where we see storms and tempests gathering around us, hovering over, and very soon to break upon us, being utterly incapable ourselves to steer our vessel to any safe harbour, and without any hope of assistance either from men or invisible powers, so that we could expect no relief, but must be in perpetual dread of being tossed up and down at the pleasure of winds and waves, till we should be starved to death, or until our vessel split upon some unseen rock, and we should sink to the bottom, would not our case be extremely lamentable? Yet this

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is but a faint image of our state here in this world, without an assured trust in the wisdom and goodness of an invisible and almighty Friend, who will lead us safely through this dangerous voyage of human life, and land us at last on some peaceful shore.

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We find ourselves placed here in a vast, and, to our view, a boundless world, and in the midst of an incomprehensible scheme of things: we know not whence we came, or whither we are going: we behold an eternity before us, but know not what shall befall us while we continue here, at our departure hence, or in any period of that endless duration through which we may pass. We see other persons around us, of the same nature, and in the same circumstances, with ourselves; they are as ignorant and as weak as we are, and can give us neither information nor assistance. When we reflect on what passes within our bosoms, we must own that our inward tranquillity is frequently disturbed and interrupted. Sometimes, indeed, pleasing desires, joyful hopes, and delightful affections, enliven and gladden our hearts; but, at other times, vain desires,

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desires, alarming fears, and guilty passions, disquiet and torment them. It is not in our power to preserve uniformly the gentle emotions and happy effects of the former, or to banish entirely the unquiet workings and baneful influences of the latter. When we look back on that part of our life which is already past, we cannot avoid being self-condemned for many instances of sin and folly, which sometimes awaken within us dire forebodings of a just punishment awaiting us in some future period of our existence; and when we look forward to that part of life which lies before us, we find reason to dread we shall be guilty of the same or the like departures from the paths of wisdom and righteousness.

Let any one retire from the noise and hurry of the world, and reflect seriously with himself upon his present state, as a state of trial in which there is a certain path marked out to him by the great Author of his being; and that, according as he walks in it or departs from it, he shall be happy or miserable in this and in another life; and after he has imprinted on his mind a just and awful sense of this interesting and important

important truth, that his eternal happiness depends upon his behaviour, let him further consider, that, through the weakness of his understanding, the strength of his passions, the fickleness of his best resolutions, and the numberless temptations of the world, he may be led astray from the path of life, and he shall find himself struck with such a sense of his danger, as will force him to break out in these or such-like meditations intermixed with prayers—" O my
" soul! how great is thy darkness, how
" deep is thy corruption, how manifold are
" the dangers to which thou art exposed in
" this thy passage through this world! thou
" knowest not where thy true happiness
" lies; thou art ignorant of the way that
" leads unto it; thou hast frequently wan-
" dered in a vain pursuit of false appear-
" ances of it; and thou art in the greatest
" danger of still wandering farther from it.

" O Father of lights, open mine eyes to
" see what my true happiness is; point out
" the road clearly that leads unto it; and
" never suffer me to depart from it. *Send*
" *forth thy light and thy truth, let them lead*
" *me and bring me to that new heaven and*

" new

SERM. *"new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness ;*
 V. *"guide me with thy council while here, and*
"afterward receive me to glory."

Further, let the same person, continuing his retirement and meditation, survey with seriousness and attention the whole extent of his duty to God, to mankind, and to himself, and the manifold awful obligations he lies under to fulfil it, and he shall scarce be able to contain himself from giving vent to the lively workings of his heart in these or some such mournful acknowledgments and ardent petitions :

"O my God, how faint and imperfect
 "are my views of thy infinite perfection
 "and glory ! how little do I feel of that
 "adoration and praise, that love and con-
 "fidence, which are indispensably due unto
 "thee ! Though thou hast presented to my
 "view part of the great frame of nature,
 "which is a standing monument, a per-
 "petual remembrancer, of thy creating
 "power, thy marvellous wisdom, and *eternal*
 "*Godhead* ; though thou hast made me
 "capable of contemplating the wondrous
 "fabric of the heavens, whose august mag-
 "nificence, immeasurable extent, and be-
 "neficial

“ neficial influences on this lower world, SERM.
“ afford me at once a lively representation V.
“ and convincing evidence of thy infinite
“ glory, thy boundless immensity, and dis-
“ fusive benignity ; though thou hast placed
“ me here in an apartment of thy world,
“ where I fee thy inexhaustible power and
“ munificence, perpetually employed in
“ raising up, supporting, and providing for
“ innumerable families of thy creatures
“ around me ; though thou hast given me
“ an organized body, fearfully and won-
“ derfully made, bearing the strongest marks
“ of Divine wisdom and kind intention, in
“ the contrivance of every part and mem-
“ ber of it ; though thou hast placed a no-
“ ble inhabitant within, whose faculties and
“ dispositions, with a capacity of endless
“ improvement in knowledge and virtue,
“ are the surest proof and truest image here
“ below of thy infinite wisdom and good-
“ ness ; nay, though thou hast favoured
“ me with a revelation of thy will, contain-
“ ing the clearest and most exprefs disco-
“ veries of thy perfections, and of what
“ adoration, praise, and confidence, are due
“ to them : yet, alas ! all these various and
“ striking

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“striking manifestations thou hast given
 “me of thyself, make but very feeble and
 “transient impressions upon my heart.
 “How manifest is the disorder of all the
 “powers of my soul! The insignificant
 “and transitory pleasures, riches, and ho-
 “nours of this vain world, employ my un-
 “derstanding, strike upon my imagination,
 “and captivate my heart; while thy per-
 “fect excellence, thy unbounded goodness,
 “and eternal providence, are either en-
 “tirely disregarded by me, or thought
 “upon with a stupid coldness and indif-
 “ference.

“O heavenly Father, author of every
 “good and perfect gift, rectify all the dis-
 “orders of my soul! restore all my facul-
 “ties to their original and worthiest em-
 “ployment! May it henceforth be my
 “chief delight to contemplate thee, in all
 “the discoveries thou hast made of thy-
 “self, in thy wondrous works, and in the
 “revelations of thy will! Give me such
 “clear and affecting views of thy supreme
 “glory and excellence, as shall kindle that
 “flame of love to thee, in my breast, which
 “shall never be extinguished, but burn
 “stronger

“ stronger and stronger every day ! Pene- SERM.
“ trate my heart with such a deep sense of V.
“ all thy mercies to me, and of thy con-
“ stant bounty to thy whole creation, as shall
“ stir up all that is within me to bless and
“ praise thy name for ever and ever ! Esta-
“ blish my soul in such a firm persuasion
“ of the infinite goodness and wisdom of thy
“ universal and everlasting providence, as
“ shall engage me to throw myself, and all
“ my great interests, upon it, with a bound-
“ less confidence ! *O Lord of Hosts, blessed is*
“ *the man that trusteth in thee ! I shall be*
“ *kept in perfect peace, when my mind is*
“ *stayed on thee.*

“ I must acknowledge before thee, the
“ searcher of hearts, that I discern and feel
“ other marks of depravity in my nature,
“ besides an habitual forgetfulness of thy
“ unchangeable goodness, and a stupid in-
“ sensibility of thy inexpressible glory and
“ greatness. Thou hast surrounded me here
“ in thy world, with my fellow-creatures,
“ the children of thy family, and made me
“ capable of exercising kind affections to-
“ wards them ; of rejoicing with them in
“ their prosperity ; of sympathising with
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“ them in their adversity ; and of perform-
 “ ing kind offices to them in every state :
 “ but, alas ! how often have I failed in this
 “ part of my duty ! I am conscious to my-
 “ self, that my friendly affections, at best,
 “ are but too weak and limited ; frequently
 “ interrupted, sometimes overcome, by the
 “ workings of the selfish and interested
 “ passions. O great Father of all, who art
 “ love, and dwellest in love, teach me to
 “ imitate thy perfect and universal good-
 “ ness ! Enlarge my heart to embrace the
 “ whole human kind ! Make me feel a per-
 “ petual flow of good-will to all thy children
 “ around me ! Check the growth, nay
 “ kill the seeds, of all malice, envy, and
 “ ill-will in my bosom ! Raise me to that
 “ happy state in which I shall forget my-
 “ self, and place my chief delight in spread-
 “ ing peace, joy, and happiness, all around
 “ me, to the utmost of my power ! Let
 “ all the tender and generous affections in-
 “ crease in strength, in fervour, and extent,
 “ in my soul, till I become fit to be trans-
 “ planted into that happy kingdom, where
 “ peace and concord, love and friendship,
 “ reign in full perfection for ever and ever.

amen

2

1 “ O my

“ O my soul, under how many hinder-
“ ances of thy improvement and progress
“ toward perfection dost thou labour ! The
“ appetites and passions of thy mortal body
“ interrupt the exercise of the nobler affec-
“ tions, weaken the sense of what is hea-
“ venly and divine, and usurp that domi-
“ nion which belongs unto thee. Under
“ their tumultuous government thy under-
“ standing is darkened, thy affections cor-
“ rupted, and thy inward tranquillity al-
“ most quite destroyed. O God, who hast
“ the hearts of all men in thy hand, and
“ turnest them whithersoever thou plearest,
“ establish thou that part of me which is
“ immortal and divine, in its just supre-
“ macy, subject all my lower passions to its
“ authority, and make me to enjoy that
“ inward composure and serenity which is
“ always to be found under its gentle sway !
“ O thou righteous Judge of all the earth,
“ who renderest to every one according to
“ his works, when I take a calm and se-
“ rious review of all the motions of my
“ heart and actions of my life, I must ac-
“ knowledge with deep regret, that I find
“ many things which I cannot approve ;

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“ nay many things for which I am self-
“ condemned, and which I cannot recal-
“ to my remembrance, without feeling the
“ peace of my mind sensibly disturbed, my
“ confidence in thee greatly damped, and
“ the awful dread of thy displeasure strongly
“ awakened.

“ Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-
“ suffering, and abundant in goodness and
“ truth, keeping mercy for thousands, for-
“ giving iniquity, transgression, and sin;
“ forgive my innumerable follies and trans-
“ gressions; deliver me from the dreadful
“ consequences of them, and punishments
“ due to them, in this and an eternal
“ world! Whatever moral imperfections
“ are still remaining in me, direct me to
“ the knowledge of them, and to the pro-
“ per means of removing them. Whenever
“ I wander from thee, thou eternal foun-
“ tain of light and life, shew me my error,
“ though it should be by fatherly correc-
“ tion; let pains or sorrows bring me
“ home, but never leave me to myself! di-
“ rect me to the right improvement of all
“ the assistances thou hast afforded me for
“ purifying and perfecting my nature?
“ Teach

“ Teach me to understand clearly, to be-
“ lieve firmly, to value justly, and comply
“ sincerely, with that last and brightest re-
“ velation thou hast given me by Jesus
“ Christ; give me a just sense of the unme-
“ rited, unsolicited, and wonderful friend-
“ ship of the eternal Son of God; who,
“ though he was rich, yet, for the sake of
“ apostate sons of men, became poor, and
“ was made flesh, and suffered, and died,
“ that he might enlighten their darkened
“ understandings, purify their corrupted
“ hearts, exalt their debased natures, deli-
“ ver them from the punishments due unto
“ their sins, set open the gates of immor-
“ tality before them, and conduct them in-
“ to the presence of their God. Teach me
“ to hearken to his divine instructions; to
“ copy after his spotless example; to ap-
“ proach to thee by him, as my great Me-
“ diator; and to expect the forgiveness of
“ my sins, on the terms marked out in his
“ Gospel! Let the serious consideration of
“ my need of such a Saviour, beget and
“ preserve in me the deepest sense of my
“ own unworthiness; and let the consider-
“ ation of thy love and mercy in appoint-

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"ing him to be the Saviour of men, inspire
 "me with the humble and modest confi-
 "dence of being restored, by him, to the
 "enjoyment of thy favour and friendship.
 "Carry me still forward, O heavenly Fa-
 "ther! by all the methods of thy provi-
 "dence and grace, in the paths of righte-
 "ousness, till I become fit to be trans-
 "planted into the higher world of spirits,
 "where I shall live in everlasting security
 "from all dangers; where I shall no more
 "bewail the darkness of my understanding
 "and the disorder of my heart; but where
 "I shall see thee my Maker unveiled;
 "where I shall love thee entirely, rejoice
 "in thee triumphantly, and celebrate thy
 "praises to all eternity! Amen,"

S E R M O N VI.

The Wisdom of God in the Gospel
Revelation.

Preached before his Majesty's High Commissioner, at the
opening of the General Assembly of the Church of
Scotland in May 1758.

I CORINTH. i. 21.

*For after that, in the wisdom of God, the
world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased
God by the foolishness of preaching to save
them that believe.*

WE learn from this chapter, and se-
veral other places of the New Tes-
tament, that the Jews and Gentiles urged
different objections against Christianity,
arising from their respective characters and
prejudices. The learned among the Gen-
tiles (to whom the Apostle's discourse here

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refers) entertained very lofty notions of the excellency of their philosophy, and of the noble effects it was capable of producing. According to their views, it was the only corrector of ignorance and vice, and the only conductor to truth and virtue; it alone formed great and good men; it afforded the only true means of enlightening and reforming the world. In their opinion it was excellent, not only upon account of the matter, but also of the manner. They admired the accuracy and strength of its reasonings, and the beauty and elegance of the expressions. On these accounts they bestowed on it the honourable appellation of *Wisdom*, and from the force of these prejudices in favour of it, they accounted the Gospel foolishness, because unlike to it in all respects.

The method which the Gospel proposed, of instructing and reforming the world by *faith*, and not by philosophical theories; by illiterate fishermen, and not by learned philosophers; was in their view a very foolish one, and which must in the event prove unsuccessful. They despised too, the plain and artless simplicity of the style of the Gospel,

Gospel, when compared with their laboured compositions and studied eloquence. The Apostle assuming it as a certain principle, That the true knowledge of God was the best foundation on which real religion and virtue, and the most valuable reformation and improvements among mankind, could be built, replies to the objections of the Gentiles in the words of the text, *For after that, in the wisdom of God (i. e. in the mysterious counsels of the Divine will), the world by wisdom (i. e. by their own reason and philosophy) knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

In which words there are two main assertions. *First*, That the much-admired wisdom of the philosophers failed in a very essential point, the leading the world to the true knowledge of God.

Secondly, That the doctrine of the Gospel, which they contemned, is ordained in the wisdom of God to be the effectual means of enlightening and saving those who believe it.

All that is further intended at present is, to offer some observations for the illustration or confirmation of the Apostle's two assertions;

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assertions ; and then, if time will allow, to point out some of the practical instructions (suited to the occasion of our meeting) arising from what may be said.

I. The first assertion is, That *the world by wisdom knew not God.*

As the Apostle was a man of unquestionable integrity, and had the best opportunities of being fully acquainted with the state of the heathen world, his testimony, as to this charge of ignorance against it, might safely be relied upon. But there is no need of resting the evidence of it upon his testimony, however venerable and worthy of credit in all respects. Every one who is acquainted with the history of the ancient world must acknowledge, that for many ages before Christ it affords the most incontestable proofs from fact, that the great body of mankind had not that true knowledge of God which did or could direct them to purity either of manners or of worship. It is true that the greatest part of the philosophers acknowledged one Supreme God ; but they taught, at the same time, and with the same sincerity, the doctrine of many subordinate deities, to whom worship

was to be given; and, which is still worse, some of these inferior gods, in the opinion of the people, and even of some of the philosophers themselves, were of the most wicked and immoral characters imaginable. Some of them were lewd and intemperate, others were envious and malignant, or fierce and cruel; real *demons* in the worst sense of the word. This distinction of good and evil deities was acknowledged in all heathen nations, and the bad ones were worshipped, not only with rites, but with actions correspondent to their characters. Hence not only prayers to kindle the fire of impure love, but prostitutions, were authorised acts of religion in honour of certain deities. Hence the barbarous combats of gladiators to appease the ghosts of the deceased, and human sacrifices to render the gods of cruel dispositions propitious. Hence too the prevailing practice of magical rites and ceremonies; and some of them of the most horrid and shocking kind, by which the worshippers of the *genii* and *demons* pretended to maintain communion with them, and even to have the power of compelling them to do whatever they desired.

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There is abundant evidence from ancient history, that not only the vulgar, but learned philosophers and great emperors, were addicted, almost to madness, to these absurd or abominable magical charms and operations. Thus was vice recommended to the imitation of the worshippers by the immoral characters of the gods, and the foundations of polytheism and idolatry were laid upon philosophical principles.

The natural consequence of this state of things was, that a Supreme Deity, though acknowledged in speculation, would not be regarded and glorified as God, either in common life, or in the exercises of religion. The homage and devotion due to him were intercepted by the perpetual attention to the surprising variety of sacrifices and other sacred rites appointed to be performed to vast multitudes of false and imaginary deities. And in all these numberless acts of worship to them, there was little of any ultimate reference to the Supreme Deity enjoined in their theological or philosophical theories: and in the common practice there was none at all. So that the Sovereign God, though
acknow-

acknowledged in theory, was entirely forgotten and neglected in the forms of religion. To which it may be added, that the conceptions the generality of the heathen world had formed of the character and moral government of the Supreme Deity, were so erroneous or defective, or so unsettled and fluctuating, that they could not have any steady effect to promote virtuous practice in the common train of life, or to administer solid consolation in the seasons of distress, or in the hour of death.

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In justice to the heathen world, it must be owned, that many of the philosophers, and men of education, discerned the immorality and absurdity of the fabulous stories of the poets concerning the gods, condemned the literal sense of them as false and impious, and earnestly wished that some reformation had been made on the established religion as to these points. But, at the same time, they maintained the essential principles of polytheism, on which the whole system of idolatry and superstition was founded. A few particular philosophers, or perhaps the whole sect of the Epicu-

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Epicureans, threw off intirely the common doctrines of polytheism, and ran into the contrary extreme of atheism and impiety. But all those philosophers who retained any grave and serious sence of things, uniformly taught the doctrine of subordinate deities, and of the worship due to them.

If the time allotted for this discourse, or the nature of it, would permit us to take a survey of the philosophers from their first appearance in Greece, about five hundred years before our Saviour, till their reputation and influence intirely sunk, about five hundred years after him, it might be shown, that during the whole course of that long period; they were so far from correcting the genius and spirit of Paganism, that they rather encouraged and promoted it both by their principles and practice. And particularly it would appear, that after Christianity began visibly to gain ground on the ancient religion, the philosophers were the most zealous protectors of it, even to the degree of bigotry and violent persecution of all who opposed it. So that the Apostle's assertion, That *the world by wisdom knew not God*, holds true, not only as to the vulgar,

vulgar, but as to the learned philosophers themselves.

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Some learned men have endeavoured to prove, that the unity of God was taught, and the errors of polytheism were detected, in those sacred mysteries of the heathens, into which select persons only were initiated. Though this should be supposed to be true, it will not invalidate the Apostle's assertion, That *the world by wisdom knew not God*: for it must be acknowledged, that it cannot be much to the honour of the institutors or directors of the mysterious rites, to shut out the greatest part of mankind from the knowledge of the most important truths, and to communicate it only to a few, under the seal of the most impenetrable secrecy. It certainly discovers a more benevolent, a more disinterested, and noble spirit in the founders of the Jewish and Christian religion, to promulgate the truth to all mankind. But whether the unity of Deity was taught in the mysteries at all, or at least whether it was taught in any other sense than was generally done by the philosophers, may be doubted: for it is highly improbable that the errors of polytheism,

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theism, or at least all the errors of polytheism, were detected in these sacred rites. That the initiated persevered in the belief and in the worship of a plurality of gods, seems to be manifest beyond all grounds of doubt. It is a most undeniable fact, that a sect of philosophers*, numerous, powerful, and flourishing for several centuries, who were great admirers of the mysteries, and very zealous to be admitted into them, were at the same time the warmest supporters of polytheism, and all its attendant superstitions.

It is not intended, in what has been said, to depreciate the whole ancient philosophy, but only to show, that the Apostle's assertion is confirmed by undoubted facts. It is but just to own, that the writings of the philosophers contain many excellent truths, fine sentiments, and precepts both of the moral and devout kind, which are very worthy of the serious attention and perusal of Christians. It is matter of just regret,

* Latter Platonists. Julian the Emperor, though an adorer of the mysteries, according to the testimony of a heathen historian, an admirer of his character, continued to believe in as many gods as the poets had described.

that

that there was no proper method of propagating those pious and moral instructions among the PEOPLE in heathen countries, and that, though there had been, they could not have had much influence upon their minds, engrossed, darkened, and corrupted with the lowest and most abominable superstitions. It may be justly doubted, if even the * men of learning and education were able to protect themselves from the corrupting influence of the low and immoral characters of the gods whom they thought themselves bound to worship.

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It may be further considered as a strong presumption of the truth of the Apostle's assertion, that as those of mankind before Christ who were left to their own wisdom, did not attain to the true knowledge of God; in like manner, those who have derived no light from him since that time,

* It is observed of the Emperor Julian (commonly called the *Apostate*), that though he was celebrated for personal chastity and severity of manners, yet he kept swarms of prostitutes and debauchees publicly about his court, and even near his person, in the time of public ceremonies. There has been no other account given of this inconsistency, but that he thought himself obliged to show them respect, and do them honour, as persons consecrated to the goddess Venus, and other deities of the like character.

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have been and are still in the same state of darkness, as to this great foundation of all religious knowledge. Our blessed Saviour declared, Matt. xi. 27. *That no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* This may be considered as a prediction; and in this view it has been sufficiently verified by the event. It cannot be shewn, that, during all the long period since the first appearance of Christianity, any one kingdom, great or small, any one city, village, or community, has attained to just notions of the Divine perfections, to comfortable views of Divine providence, to purity of worship, to a perfect system of morals, or to steady hopes of immortality, without the aid of Gospel-light. Surely the experience of near four thousand years must be admitted as a satisfactory proof, if not of the insufficiency, at least of the unsuccessfulness, of human reason in matters of religion.

As to the abstract questions, How far the powers of the human mind could go in finding out the truths of religion; either, how far one man, who exercises his reason to the best advantage, could go; or how far the joint inquiries of a society of men

taking

taking the advantage of the observations and discoveries of their predecessors, could carry their researches? It is very difficult, and no way material, to resolve them. The only question of real importance, is concerning the fact; namely, Whether, notwithstanding the vast powers of the human mind, discovered by great improvements made in many beneficial branches of knowledge, such as geometry, astronomy, legislation, morals, and arts, mankind did not still continue in such a deplorable state of darkness with regard to religious knowledge, as rendered the revelation of the Gospel absolutely necessary to accomplish the gracious designs of Providence, and as affords the highest ground of thankfulness for Jesus Christ, the unspeakable gift of God? Every candid person who is acquainted with the state of religion in the heathen world even in its most enlightened times, will be at no loss how to answer this question.

It is not intended to enter into the examination of the speculative question, How far the light of nature can go? It may not perhaps be improper to offer some general observations relating to it.

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In the first place, let it be observed, That we cannot certainly conclude from what the philosophers have actually taught, that so far the unaided light of reason has gone; because we find some of the oldest and best philosophers acknowledging that they did not investigate some of their most important doctrines, but received them from ancient traditions. It may further deserve our attention, that these first sages, who were not so puffed up with conceited notions of the power of their own reason as to reject all traditionary opinions, spoke frequently more justly and more worthily of Deity and Providence, and with less hesitation of a future state, than their successors, whose pride of understanding made them depend solely on the strength of their own reasoning.

It is still further observable, that we find these more ancient philosophers expressing, sometimes in very pathetic terms, a deep sense of the uncertainty of their own reasonings, and of their need of a better guide. Nay, sometimes they discover ardent wishes, at least, if not some faint expectations, of a Divine Instructor. These things are

are strong presumptions that some of the best doctrines of ancient philosophy were rather derived from old traditions, which were long held venerable, than found out by philosophical disquisitions.

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Again, let us further consider, that it is no easy matter to us who dwell in the midst of light, even to form a conception of the obscurity, confusion, and uncertainty, which may have perplexed the thoughts of the most knowing men in the ages of darkness. When we reflect upon the disadvantages of their situation, we may see ground to conclude, that it required greater efforts of reasoning, than we are apt upon first thoughts to imagine, to ascertain even some points which are commonly looked upon as very obvious. For instance, the great fundamental doctrine of the Unity of God, is commonly considered as extremely plain and evident, even from reason. But to judge with more fairness of the obviousness of the evidence for it, let us candidly attend to the arguments which the most approved modern reasoners employ to establish it. They use two sorts of arguments; namely, metaphysical ones, and others taken

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from the unity of design every where apparent in the constitution of the universe, and in the structure of particular beings. The first kind of arguments, it will be admitted, are too abstracted and refined to produce a firm conviction, or indeed any conviction at all, in the minds of the generality of mankind. The second sort of them could not have any great or general effect in the earlier ages of the world, before philosophy was cultivated, and the system of the universe inquired into. Even after philosophy is advanced to a considerable degree of perfection, few enter so deeply into philosophical discoveries as to feel the whole force of arguments drawn from them. Perhaps one would not err much who should assert, that the belief of one Supreme Deity, so far as it did prevail in the heathen world, was rather owing to some ancient traditions on the point, or to a supposed resemblance betwixt human governments and the government of the universe, than to any solid and convincing arguments drawn from the depths of philosophy. It might in like manner be shewn, after all that philosophy in its highest state
of

of improvement has been able to suggest in proof of other points of the utmost importance, better and more satisfactory evidence, and more adapted to the capacity and situation of the greatest part of mankind, are still wanting and earnestly wished for, by every one who retains a serious and devout sense of his present state of darkness, imperfection, and mortality.

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That we may see whether the Gospel affords any grounds of satisfaction with regard to points of great importance to the peace of the human mind, or any grounds more level to every capacity, let us now proceed to consider the Apostle's second assertion in the text.

II. *It pleased God*, the Apostle says, *by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* This assertion implies principally three things :

I. *First*, That the scheme of salvation through faith in the revelation of the Gospel, is a *wise* one.

II. *Secondly*, That it is an *effectual* one.

III. And, *Thirdly*, That the *execution* of it is a chief object of Divine Providence.

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Let us consider each of these in their order.

As to the *first*, The Apostle indeed, in the language of the conceited pretenders to wisdom in those days, calls it *foolishness*; yet at the same time he plainly intimates, that what they called *foolishness*, was in reality the most perfect *wisdom*; and in the verses following the text, he expressly calls it the Wisdom of God. It must be obvious at first sight, that the exhibition of the wisdom of this scheme in the most extensive view of it, as laid before the foundation of the world, and as carried on in a continued progress and an amazing variety of steps from the first apostacy till the restitution of all things, is an undertaking to which none of the sons of men are equal. The full display of the beauty and marvellous wisdom of it, in its wonderful contrivance and wonderful execution, from the beginning to its final accomplishment, must be reserved for a fund of everlasting entertainment in the regions of perfect knowledge. It is our duty, however, in our present state, to contemplate the obvious and striking wisdom of those great lines of it which
are

are clearly revealed and are easily comprehended.

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Every one knows that wisdom consists in chusing the most proper means to accomplish the best ends. The great end proposed by the Gospel Revelation, is the deliverance of mankind from a state of darkness, corruption, and guilt, and raising them to a state of light, purity, and favour with God: and whether we consider, *First*, The matter of this revelation; or, *Secondly*, The method of communicating it and confirming its truth, we shall discern all possible marks of the highest wisdom.

First, The matter of this revelation may be summed up under the two heads, of doctrines and precepts.

1. With regard to the doctrines, let it be observed, that it is not the intention of them to instruct us in the knowledge of every thing that may be really useful to us with respect to the interests of this present life, far less of every thing which, from curiosity, we may have a mighty desire to know. The Gospel Revelation considers mankind in their highest capacity, as the rational and accountable subjects of God, and as capable

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capable both of present and future happiness or misery according to their behaviour. And it is the chief, if not the sole, design of it, to give us those views and impressions of our nature, of our state, of the perfections, the counsels, the laws, and the government of God, which, under the influence of Divine grace, are the immediate means of the purity, of the comfort, and of the moral order and perfection of our souls. As we are corrupted and disordered, our natures are incapable of their true happiness till they are purified and restored to order. As we are guilty and mortal creatures, we can have no true consolation without the hopes of pardon and immortality. It is evident, therefore, that the chief use and excellence of the doctrines of Revelation must lie in the influence they have upon the sanctification and consolation of our hearts. And, indeed, the whole strain of the Scriptures shews us, that these are the great ends of all the discoveries of the Gospel. Our Saviour evidently supposes that truth is of a purifying nature when he prays, *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth* *. The

* John, xvii. 17.

Apostle

Apostle teaches the same doctrine when he asserts, that *God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth* *. The Apostle John, after speaking of the truths of the Gospel, adds, *These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full* †.

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It must be obvious to every one who attends to the natural operations of truth upon the minds of men, that it is not the precepts of Christianity, but the truths of it, which are the direct and immediate means of purifying and comforting their hearts. It is not, for instance, the precept, *Love not the world*; but it is the clear discernment of the truth, that worldly things are vain and insufficient for happiness, which is the effectual mean of abating our too ardent love and pursuit of them. It is not the precept, *Humble yourselves*; but it is the clear view and lively impression of the truth of our state, as dependent, weak, indigent, depraved, and guilty creatures, that produces an humble temper of mind. It is not the command *To love God with all*

* 2 Thess. ii. 13.

† 1 John, i. 4.

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our hearts; but it is a full view of the truth of the Divine character as excellent and perfect in the highest degree, which is the natural means of kindling the sacred flame of love in our breasts. It is not the precept, *Rejoice in the Lord Jesus*; but it is the belief of the truth, as to his glorious character and undertaking, and the mighty benefits we enjoy and hope to enjoy by him, which excites real joy in our hearts.

Here then lies the excellency and wisdom of the doctrines of the Gospel, that they tally exactly with the present state of mankind, and are admirably adapted (with the concurrence of Divine assistance, which we are encouraged to ask) to cure every disease, every disorder of the human heart; to beget, to cherish, and confirm every pure, every virtuous, every pious disposition; and to establish our souls in peace and joy. Every one must be sensible that the bounds prescribed for this Discourse will not permit me to take all the doctrines of Christianity under consideration, and to show that the firm belief of each of them has a natural tendency to cleanse us from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect

perfect in us true holiness and spiritual joy. We may just mention a few instances for the illustration of the point. SERM.
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Thus is it a certain fact, that mankind are at present in a state of corruption, and at the same time apt to be insensible of the misery and danger of it under the government of God? Surely nothing can be conceived more fit to awaken them to a just sense of their condition, than a messenger from heaven clothed with the authority of God, setting before them the intrinsic malignity and misery of sin, and the certain, the dreadful, and eternal consequences of continuing in the love and practice of it. If we could descend to a particular view of the several disorders and corruptions of the souls of men, it were easy to show, that the firm belief of the doctrines of the Gospel is the natural and the best antidote or remedy for each of them: and particularly it might be shown, that the clear and full manifestation which the Gospel has given of the character of God, and the laws of his moral government, and of the terms of salvation, are admirably calculated to root out the principles of superstition, and all false notions

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notions destructive of the virtue and happiness of mankind, and to plant in their room those principles which have a natural tendency to promote their virtue, their perfection, and felicity. But this would be a subject more proper for a practical treatise than a single sermon. Every one who has a just value for the doctrines of the Gospel, and who takes pleasure in the contemplation of Divine wisdom, will trace out with great delight the natural operations and effects of the truths of Revelation on the hearts of those who really believe them.

Again ; Are mankind in a state of guilt ? Is there a sense of guilt and dread of the Divine displeasure so universal among mankind, in some degree or other, that it may be considered as a characteristic of the species ? Are the minds of all sorts of men, from the most learned philosophers down to the greatest savages, subject on some occasions and some serious moments to such remorse as makes them wish for some method of expiating their offences ? Are the minds even of the most enlightened men, those who have the highest standard
of

of moral perfection and the quickest sense of duty, so conscious of the guilt of sins of lesser malignity, and of the omissions of what they ought to have done, that they dread, at times, what the consequences may be under the government of a God of perfect holiness? Does not this sense of guilt sometimes rise to such a degree of anxiety and distress as greatly to disturb, and sometimes even to distract the minds of men? Does the force of this natural sentiment appear not only in individuals, but in the societies of mankind? Have atonements of one sort or another, for averting the displeasure of Deity, been established in all national religions in all ages of the world? What can be conceived more admirably fitted to give relief and consolation to the heart of man, alarmed with the fears of deserved punishment, than the doctrines of the Gospel, *that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing to men their trespasses**; and that Jesus Christ, by his obedience and humiliation to death, even the death of the cross, has offered

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

SERM. up an atonement * of the highest dignity,
 VI. and most perfect and extensive efficacy, of
 which the great God and merciful Governor of the world has given the strongest testimony of his acceptance.

The time will not allow me to point out in what a variety of ways, and with what divine wisdom, this doctrine of Christianity, with the other doctrines of the exaltation of Jesus to be a Prince and Saviour, connected with it, are calculated to promote both the purity and joy of the hearts of the children of men. Let it only be observed, that the peculiar doctrines of our peace and acceptance with God through Jesus Christ,

* There is reason to suspect that some are prejudiced against the doctrine of Jesus Christ's being the propitiation for the sins of the world from a wrong notion of it, as implying that God was rendered merciful and placable by it, when he was otherwise before: whereas it is the clear and undisputed doctrine of the Gospel, that God is essentially benign and merciful; and that the propitiation is so far from being the cause of the Divine mercy, that it is the effect of it: It was the essential mercy of the Divine nature which moved him to appoint the atonement, and to accept of it. The atonement through the blood of Jesus is the method chosen by infinite wisdom, of extending his essential mercy to penitents, in a way perfectly consistent with the purity, the righteousness, the order, and dignity of his moral government.

and

and that the only acceptable method of ap-
proaching to God in religious worship is,
in the name of Jesus, to have a native ten-
dency to bear down that vanity, pride, and
self-confidence, so apt to arise in the heart
of man, and to beget and preserve that
humility of mind, which is the only true
foundation on which the whole superstruc-
ture of the virtues of the Christian life can
be raised. The serious and habitual sense
of those important truths must carry along
with it an humbling impression of our guilt
and unworthiness, while at the same time
it solaces our hearts with the exalting hopes
of the favour of God, and of that eternal
life which is his gift through Jesus Christ
our Lord.

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We cannot conclude this head without
observing the conspicuous wisdom of the ap-
pointment of the one Mediator the sole Head,
the sole Law-giver and Judge of his Church.
It was a very ancient prediction concern-
ing him, *that to him the gathering of the
people should be*, Gen. xlix. 10. There is a
later one to the same purpose, John xi. 52.
That he should gather together in one the
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children of God that were scattered abroad.

The whole New Testament is full of this doctrine, *that he is the head in whom all fulness dwells.* He himself foretold, *that when he should be lifted up, he would draw all men after him.* Now it is evident to every one, that the reducing of men under one great head, is the most natural means of uniting them to one another, and to the great God and Father of all. The most ordinary observation of the world will convince us what a mighty power the attachment to one chief in learning, in arts, or in government, always has to bind men together in affection and friendly society! This is the effect of it, when there is nothing but joint admiration without dependence and expectations; but the effect is much stronger when there is a dependence upon, and hopes of many great advantages common to all, from the power and favour of the leader. How much more then must the subjecting of mankind to one great and glorious Head, for whom they have the highest veneration, from whom they have received the most invaluable benefits, and on whom all their future hopes depend,

depend, contribute to unite them in the strictest bonds of friendship. Here are all possible motives to the most hearty and entire union; here are no sources of division and dissension from competition of interest or rivalry in the favour of the Prince. All faithful subjects are equally assured of his favour and protection, and of being conducted forward to final felicity and glory under his divine administration.

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Perhaps it will be asked, Since it is the natural tendency of this constitution to produce union, why does not the effect follow; why do we not see a total union among the subjects of this kingdom? If this were the proper place for it, perhaps it might be shewn, that it has produced very real and visible effects, besides those invisible ones which it certainly does produce at all times on the minds of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We have ground to hope, that it will still operate in a more conspicuous manner even in this world. The full and perfect effects of it are justly hoped for in some future period, according to the all-prevalent prayer of the glorious

SERM. Head himself, *That they may be one, even*
 VI. *as we are one, John xvii. 21, 22.*

The tendency of this divine appointment of one Mediator the Head of all, to unite mankind unto God, is so plain and obvious, that it is scarcely necessary to illustrate it. It must be evident, at first sight, that the submission of mankind to this one great Head and Minister of Providence, is, at the same time, an actual subjection to the Father who appointed Him. There is an inseparable connection betwixt subjection to the Son of God, constituted by the Father, Lord and Judge of all, and real subjection to the Father himself. The laws of the Mediator are the laws of God; and the very first and greatest of these laws is, to love the one God with all our hearts, and with all our souls. Besides, Jesus is the image of the invisible God, *he that hath known him, knows the Father also* *. The love of the perfect Image coincides with the love of the all-perfect Original. *He that hateth the Son, hateth the Father also* †. That union with God and man must

* John, xiv. 7.

† John, xv. 23.

for ever constitute the highest perfection and happiness of our rational and immortal natures, is a truth so plain and evident that it needs neither explication nor proof.

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We shall conclude this part of the subject by observing, that this circumstance, that the great Mediator was once visible in a body, tabernacling among mankind, is not to be overlooked in an inquiry into the wisdom of the Christian scheme. For, by dwelling in flesh, he was qualified to instruct us in the will of God in a familiar manner, to set us a perfect example of all virtue, in a real human character, to have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, and to suffer and die as a propitiation for our sins. To which, perhaps, it may be added, that as the mind of man seems somehow to stand in need of something visible, on which the imagination can lay hold and rest itself; the Gospel is wisely accommodated to this demand of human nature. When we meditate on our glorious Mediator, who is now invisible, under the characters of our great Instructor, High-priest, and Law-giver, we can more easily stay our imaginations, and fix our thoughts, by reflect-

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ing upon him as once visible in our nature, than we could have done, had he been a purely angelical being, who had never appeared in a visible form upon earth, or conversed with mankind.

2. We now proceed to the other branch which we mentioned of the *matter* of Christianity; namely, the *precepts* of it. Here it is not intended to explain or illustrate the purity and perfection of the Christian precepts, or to compare them with any other systems of morals, which may have been held in esteem among mankind, that their superior excellency may thence appear. Let it suffice at present to observe, that though the precepts of our holy religion are not the direct and immediate means of our sanctification and comfort, as has been shewn under the former head; yet they are real, though more remote means of them, and as important and essential parts of the Gospel as the doctrines themselves. They are the laws of Christianity, which set before us that standard of moral perfection which we ought to have always full in our eye: They lay us under the solemn and indispensable obligation, to
aspire

aspire perpetually to a nearer conformity to the perfections and to the will of God in all holiness of heart and life. They command us, in the strongest and the most sacred manner, to employ our most serious attention upon the truths of his religion, to inculcate them upon ourselves, till they produce their full effect on the purity and comfort of our souls. And, indeed, without a humble consciousness that we have endeavoured to govern ourselves by the laws of our religion, as far as human infirmity will permit, we can have no well-grounded hope of the favour of God, and of that happy *immortality which is brought to light by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Secondly. Having taken this general view of the Matter of the Revelation of the Gospel, we now go forward to consider what was proposed in the *second* place; the Manner of communicating it, and of confirming the truth of it.

The wisdom of the Gospel is no less conspicuous in the manner of communicating its instruction than in the matter of it.

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That faith in the testimony of a divine teacher, is a method of instruction more suited to the present state of mankind, than that of laboured deductions of reason and philosophy, is evident on the smallest reflection. The bulk of mankind never were, nor are at present, in such a situation that they could reason out a clear and full system of the truths of religion for themselves, or even follow the trains of reasonings of others, so as to receive satisfactory conviction from them. But when the doctrines of religion are delivered as communications from the Father of lights by a person who has given full evidence of his divine commission, there is not only a plain foundation laid for giving credit to his testimony, but it is accompanied with an authority which commands the attention of the human mind, and imposes an obligation upon it to believe and obey. Thousands, nay, millions of mankind, may be brought to the knowledge of the truths and duties of natural religion, in this way, who could never have attained to it by the disquisitions of philosophy; and as to the peculiar truths

truths of divine revelation, there is no other way of attaining the knowledge of them. SERM.
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The Gospel method of instruction is further accommodated, with the most striking wisdom, to the circumstances of mankind, as it not only employs the plainest and most simple expressions and similitudes, in the delivery of its doctrines and precepts; but it takes the assistance of such facts and examples as the lowest understanding can easily comprehend, and the weakest memory may easily retain. Does the Gospel teach the rejoicing doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? It not only does it by plain assertions, but examples of dead persons raised to life. Does it teach that the Saviour has the power of forgiving sins? He exercises, in the view of all, that very power, by delivering men from those diseases which are the punishments of sin. Again: Is the one eternal God, the Creator of all things, too great, and too glorious an object for our weak minds to behold? Would his unveiled glory quite overpower our feeble natures? The Gospel exhibits him to us in a mild and shaded glory, in the person, the

SERM. VI. the character, and conduct of Jesus Christ,
who is the visible image of the invisible God.

The divine perfections and providence are represented to us in him in a way suited to our low capacities. When our Saviour said, *I will, be thou clean*; and, *Man, stretch forth thy withered hand*; and the effect instantaneously followed, he gave a striking representation of that Almighty creative power which brought this universe into existence. When he said to the sea, *Be thou calm*! he gave an image of the sovereign dominion of God over all nature. His many unerring predictions of future events were a lively representation of that divine foreknowledge and omniscience which sees at one view the whole series of events from the beginning to the end of time. It were easy in like manner to shew, that the spotless purity, the disinterested and ever active goodness, the melting compassion, the unconquerable meekness, the incomparable lenity, and forgiving temper, of the Son of man, manifested in his character and conduct, are the justest and noblest representations of the moral perfections of God.

Add

Add to this, that in the life of Jesus we have all the Christian virtues set before us in their full perfection, as patterns for our imitation. And this is done in a series of facts well calculated to inform the judgment, to warm the affections, and to make a lasting impression upon the memory. This pattern is not only perfect, and suited to our condition, but is further enforced by the dignity of the person, and by the sweet but powerful influence accompanying the idea, of the Friend, the Benefactor and Saviour of the world. Besides, we have in Jesus, not only a pattern of all virtue, but a pattern also of the reward that shall be bestowed upon it. *As he overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne**; so if we overcome the temptations of the world, he will grant unto us to sit down with him on his throne. Here is a proof, from fact, of a future reward. And surely a more elevating and triumphant consideration cannot enter into the heart of man than this, that our common nature is already crowned with glory and honour in the person of Jesus Christ; and that if we

* Rev. iii. 21.

resemble

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resemble him in purity and goodness here, we shall be made like unto him in felicity and glory hereafter:

Again: The divine wisdom of the method in which Christianity is confirmed, will appear, if we consider that the proofs which it offers of its truth, are not such subtle and difficult reasonings as may perplex the minds of mankind; but they are either appeals to the natural sentiments of the human heart, or to such facts and events as lie open to the examination of persons of all capacities. What is commonly called the *internal* evidence of Christianity is nothing else but an appeal to the heart of man, as to the excellency of its doctrines and precepts, and as to the perfect purity, goodness, and integrity, of the character of its author. The *external* evidence from miracles and prophecies are every way suited to work on the minds of all mankind.

Miracles are the seals of heaven, and strike conviction at once. But besides their being the most authentic evidences of the divine commission of him that performs them, and of the truth of the doctrines which

which he publishes, they, at the same time, SERM.
VI. are the most irresistible proofs which can be given, that this visible world has a Superior, who can alter and change its order and laws at his pleasure. Some of the inquiring and philosophical part of mankind have inclined to conclude, from the regularity and stability of the order of the material world, that it cannot be changed by any power whatsoever; nay, that this whole of things is the eternal and self-existent Being. Miracles are the shortest and most unanswerable confutation of this impious and atheistical opinion.

The other great proof of Christianity taken from the accomplishment of prophecies, is likewise accommodated, with the highest wisdom, to the condition of mankind. Predictions of whole series of events the most conspicuous, the most memorable, the most interesting, of all others in the course of the world, and quite beyond the reach of any human foresight, when perceived to be exactly accomplished, can scarce fail to strike persons of all conditions and of all capacities, and produce a conviction of the most satisfactory kind, that
there

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there is in fact a supreme intelligence and wisdom conducting all the affairs of the world. How much the belief of a Providence directing and governing all things, elevates the human mind and fills it with a pure and sacred joy, the experience of all virtuous persons will abundantly testify. And at the same time, the undoubted accomplishment of these prophecies gives the fullest satisfaction that the person who delivered them knows the counsels and will of God in other instances, and may be safely relied on when he speaks in the name of God, and declares his will, either concerning the rules of life, and the terms upon which sinners may be received into his favour, or concerning the future and eternal state of those who embrace, and of those who reject, the Gospel.

This argument from prophecy is peculiarly adapted to establish the mind in the fullest persuasion of the certainty of what the Gospel reveals concerning a future judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and a happy immortality beyond death and the grave. It must be acknowledged, that the accomplishment of numberless former predictions

dictions is the best pledge and security that those which are not yet accomplished shall also come to pass in God's due time. The acutest philosophers readily admit, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is incapable of strict demonstrative evidence. Yet without the persuasion of it, all other doctrines, even those of a good God and wise providence, though never so fully demonstrated, can impart but feeble and imperfect consolation to the hearts of mortal creatures. Where then shall we go for satisfaction as to this most interesting of all questions? Shall we sit down at the feet of the philosophers? They acknowledge they cannot satisfy us. Shall we rely on their conjectures and probable reasonings? Or shall we hearken to the prophetic spirit which has been tried and found faithful in all instances from the beginning of the world to this day? Surely that Spirit which has given the most convincing evidence imaginable, that it foresaw the whole train of events from the beginning to the end of this world, may be relied upon as best qualified to inform us of what is to follow

after

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after the dissolution of the present state of things.

To conclude : It is a further proof of the wisdom of prophecy as a principal evidence of divine Revelation, that it gives the strongest presumption of the reality of miracles. For if there are the most convincing proofs that some men have been endowed with extraordinary, nay supernatural knowledge and foresight, this renders it highly probable that the same persons, or others for the same great and good ends, may also have been endowed with miraculous powers. And thus, we who live in the present age, and have equal, if not in some respects fuller, evidence of the fulfilment of prophecies, than those who lived in former ones, may justly consider the argument from prophecy, as a strong confirmation of all the other evidences with which the reality of the Gospel miracles is ascertained.

From what has been suggested in this discourse it appears, that whether we consider the matter of the Christian Revelation,

of the manner of communicating it, or the kind of evidence with which it is supported, we shall find that they all concur to ascertain the perfect wisdom of its author. If any one pretends to call in question the perfect propriety and fitness of the means which the Divine Wisdom has chosen in the Gospel to enlighten, to convert, and to save mankind; it is incumbent upon him to devise another set of means better calculated to accomplish these great and good ends. On this point we may be secure, and may safely challenge the utmost efforts of human imagination to form any scheme, the wisdom of which will be able to bear a comparison with the wisdom of the Gospel.

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The former Subject continued.

I CORINTH. i. 21.

For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

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IN these words the Apostle asserts two things :

First, That the much admired wisdom of the philosophers failed in a very essential point, the leading the world to the true knowledge of God.

Secondly, That the doctrine of the Gospel, which they despised as weak and foolish, is yet ordained in the wisdom of God to be the effectual means of enlightening and saving those who believe it. *It pleased God,*
says

says he, *by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* SERM.
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This last assertion implies three things :

1st, That the scheme of salvation through the faith of Christianity is a *wise* one.

2^{dly}, That it is an *effectual* one. And,

3^{dly}, That the *execution* of it is a chief object of Divine Providence.

The *wisdom* of the Gospel Revelation has been illustrated by some observations on the *matter* of it, and also upon the *manner* in which it was communicated, and the truth of it confirmed to the world.

I now proceed to illustrate

The Second thing in the Apostle's assertion, That this wise scheme of the salvation of mankind by the Gospel shall be made *effectual*. It has pleased God actually to save by it those who embrace and submit to it. The effects of Christianity are too large a subject to be treated here at full length: Let it suffice at present to make a few observations; such as,

First, That many of the most real and important effects of the dispensation of the Gospel are of a silent and invisible nature, and cannot admit of such proof as is not

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liable to dispute and cavil among those who love obscurity and doubtfulness. We cannot draw aside the veil which hides the invisible world, and show the myriads who through faith in Jesus Christ already inherit the promises, and rejoice in the full and uninterrupted assurance of the favour of God. Neither can the secret, yet powerful efficacy of the doctrines of Christianity, in turning many millions in this present state *from darkness to light, from the power of sin and Satan to the service of the living God,* and in pouring the most divine consolations into their hearts under the distresses of life and in the hour of death, be demonstrated in such a manner as to silence those who are determined to gainsay it.

Secondly, It may be observed, that as the principles of Christianity have an undoubted, natural, and invariable tendency to produce good effects, and as they have taken hold of the minds of innumerable multitudes of mankind through a course of ages, they must have produced those happy effects in some degree. To say that no good effects have been produced in any degree, or in any one instance, by the principles

principles of the Gospel, though acknowledged to be believed, amounts to a denial of the tendency of them. This is what the highest scepticism will not venture to assert. But we do not rest the argument upon the tendency, but assert, that Christianity has actually produced good effects as conspicuous and undeniable, at least, as were ever produced by any other principles whatever; and that they were the effects of Christianity in the strictest sense, and cannot be ascribed to any other causes, we maintain on these three grounds: *First*, Because they flowed naturally from the principles of Christianity;—*Secondly*, Because they were produced on those only who believed and professed them;—and, *Thirdly*, Because they were not accidental and transitory effects, but as lasting and steady as the principles themselves, and accompanied them wherever they spread.

For instance, the great fundamental doctrine of one only God, the sole object of worship, who is to be worshipped through one Mediator, and the principal part of whose worship consists in rational prayers and praises, and imitation of his moral per-

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sections, as it has a natural tendency to extirpate the principles of Polytheism and superstition, so it did in fact extirpate them in the most visible manner. The men who embraced this great essential principle, at once threw off that immense load of superstitious practices, to which the doctrine of numberless objects of worship had formerly subjected them. The civil and ecclesiastical history of the first ages of Christianity affords the fullest evidence, that the converts to Christianity would not join in any one rite or ceremony performed in honour of the heathen gods. Such a mighty revolution did the belief of one God produce not only in the minds, but in the practice of Christians. The history of the persecutions under the heathen emperors, in which they suffered death in the most formidable shapes, rather than offer incense or sacrifice to a heathen god, is a standing demonstration of the undoubted effects which their principles had upon them. And it is certain, that wherever Christianity spread, it entirely demolished Polytheism and all its appendages. So that now for more than a thousand years, incense has not been offered,

offered, or a libation made, to any heathen deity through the greatest part at least of the Roman empire: it is so evident, that these effects bear all the three characters mentioned above of real and genuine ones, that it needs not be particularly illustrated. And if we candidly compare this change which Christianity has introduced with the change made by any sect of philosophy, any institution of religion or civil government, we shall be at no loss to determine which is the greatest.

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Again, the effect of the Christian principles in abolishing the evocation of demons, with all the train of absurd, and sometimes horrid practices, which accompanied it, is extremely remarkable. The history of the heathen world allows us no room to doubt that not only the vulgar, but the most learned philosophers and emperors, were addicted, almost to a degree of frenzy, to the practice of * theurgic or diabolical rites,

as

* There were two kinds of magic in the heathen world; the one was called *Theurgy*, and the other *Sortery*. The first was employed in the worship of the good and beneficent demons; and however strange, fanatical, and absurd it really was, yet in the opinion of those who practised it,

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as certain means of maintaining communion with the demons, and of obliging them to comply with their desires. As the renunciation of all communion with demons was the natural tendency of the belief of Christianity, so we find in fact that it sometimes produced this effect in an immediate and instantaneous manner. *And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many also of them which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before*

it was a divine art, which had no other aim than to purify and perfect the souls of men; and those who were so happy as to perform the rites of it in a right manner, enjoyed intimate communion with the demons, were invested with all their powers, and admitted to the full vision of their essence. The other kind (*viz. Sorcery*) was employed only in the worship of the wicked demons; the ceremonies of it were horrible and shocking, and the end proposed by it was to do mischief, and to perpetrate crimes. This distinction ought to be carried along with us in judging of many of the highest characters in the ancient world. The kind of magic to which they were devoted, gives ground for a considerable difference in the judgment we form of them. Whether the passage in the sixth chapter of the Acts refers to the one or other of these kinds of magic, or to both, we shall not now inquire,

all

all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty pieces of silver *. That these curious books contained the rules to be observed for the acceptable performance of the magical or theurgic arts, is acknowledged by all inquirers into antiquity.

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It deserves our particular attention, in an enumeration of the good effects of the Revelation of the Gospel, that the subjection of Christians to one great head, their sole Instructor and Lawgiver, has produced such an unity of faith as to many essential articles both of natural and revealed religion, as (notwithstanding differences of opinion in lesser matters) was never found in the heathen world. It has likewise produced an uniform reception of a body of moral laws, of such acknowledged excellence, that nothing even in imagination can be conceived more pure and perfect. These effects of this divine constitution of one glorious head are more important and signal than is commonly imagined, and must always prove a real foundation of union among Christians.

* Acts, xix. 17, 18, 19.

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The doctrine too of the all-sufficient sacrifice of the great High-Priest of our profession, who by *one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, has put an end to the practice of animal sacrifices, as well as to the more horrid custom of human ones, both which prevailed in the greatest part of the ancient world.

That the genius of Christianity is kind and benign, must be admitted by every one who attends to it. According to the Christian doctrine, *God is love, and dwells in love*; and the great Mediator was animated in the whole of his undertaking by the same generous and divine principle. The laws of Jesus breathe nothing but love and tenderness; and his whole life is one continued proof of the most disinterested and unwearied beneficence. The Christian heaven is the land of love and of everlasting friendship. This benign spirit of our holy religion has manifested itself in producing the most beneficial effects, in a variety of ways, wherever it has been received and understood. The influence of it upon the civil laws of nations, in making them more gentle

gentle and merciful than they were before, must be owned by all who have read history with a proper attention.

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The laws prohibiting the exposition of infants, and the bloody and barbarous entertainment of gladiators*, the laws and customs softening or abolishing slavery, and those regulating the commerce betwixt

* Those who have not attended to history are apt to imagine that the exhibition of gladiators was a rare thing, and that when it happened a few pairs only were engaged. But it was far otherwise; under the Roman emperors this inhuman entertainment cost innumerable lives. Cæsar, when edile, gave 320 gladiators: Gordian, in the time of his edileship, exhibited twelve entertainments, that is one for each month; in some of these there were 500 champions, and in none of them less than 150. Taking it at a medium, he must have exhibited at the very least 3000. Titus exhibited these cruel shows for 100 days together. The good and moderate Trajan continued these spectacles for 123 days, and in that time gave 10,000. When we consider how many different ranks of people gave these entertainments, ediles, pretors, questors, consuls, emperors, and priests, besides private persons at funerals (which became so common a practice, that it was an article in a last will), we must be convinced that the numbers were incredible. What adds to the inhumanity of this custom is, that it was designed for a gay entertainment, and attended as such. This horrible custom grew to such an extravagance, that it was found necessary to moderate it by law, in the time of the heathen emperors. Constantine first prohibited it altogether; but so violent was the taste for it, that it crept in again. The Emperor Honorius entirely suppressed it.

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the sexes, by forbidding polygamy, and restraining the licentiousness of divorcing, have all flowed from the spirit of Christianity, have prevented much misery, have been the sources of a great improvement in the manners of men during these last ages, and have much increased the happiness of the world *.

It is not necessary to insist at full length on the visible good effects of Christianity on the tempers and manners of the first Christians. If we were to produce here the whole evidence we have for the distinguished purity and goodness of the lives of the first Christians, when compared with their heathen neighbours, we might insist on the following topics : the authority of the Apostles in their epistles ; the testimony of the ancient Christian writers, their solemn appeals to acknowledged facts in the apologies for Christianity presented to heathen emperors ; and the encomiums † made upon them by the

* It would be a work for a treatise, and perhaps a very useful one, to trace out the civil laws which took their rise from the spirit of Christianity, and to delineate their happy effects on society, through a course of ages.

† Such as the emperor Julian's recommendation to one of his high priests, to imitate the manners of the Christians.

the heathens themselves, and some of them their most inveterate enemies. All these circumstances united form a proof as strong and convincing as can well be given for any fact of so ancient a date.

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Thirdly, The assertion of the Apostle in the text further implies, that the scheme of the salvation of mankind, through faith in the Revelation of the Gospel, is a chief object of Divine Providence. *It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.* The word in the original is very significant, but our translation does not reach the full import of it. It denotes a high degree of delight and complacency in a person or thing. It is the word used by the miraculous voice at our Saviour's baptism and transfiguration, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* It might easily be shown, that the same grounds of complacency are referred to in these passages, and in the text. An expression of such energy (*it pleased God highly*), when applied to the Gospel method of salvation, seems to denote, that it is the chief

tians. This fact we are assured of by the emperor's own letter, which is still remaining.

scheme

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scheme of Providence with respect to mankind, to which all others are subservient. And indeed the general strain of the Scriptures lead us to conceive of it in this elevated view. We are every where taught in the New Testament, that the appearance of the Saviour among mankind was in consequence of an original plan of Providence laid before the world began. *God, who hath saved us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Lord and Saviour.* 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundations of the world.* Eph. i. 3, 4*. Besides, according to the best notions we can form of the wisdom and goodness of God, either from reason or revelation, the deliverance of mankind from a state of darkness, corruption, and guilt, and the restoration of them to a state of light, purity, and friendship with God, must be the ultimate design of

* Eph. i. 10. 1 Pet. i. 20. John, xvii. 24. Rev. xiii. 8.

all the dispensations of Providence towards them. This view of things is further confirmed from the history of Providence, as preserved in the sacred Scriptures. There we have a series of dispensations narrated, which gradually unfold the designs of Heaven, and lead forward towards the manifestation of the Messiah, as a grand period.

The most remarkable revelations of the will of God made to Abraham and the patriarchs who succeeded him, till Moses, and the whole succession of prophets from him, down to Malachy, point towards this great event. It was the ultimate design of the separation of the descendants of Jacob from the rest of mankind, and of the whole Mosaic dispensation, to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah, and to administer full evidence of him when he should appear. If the posterity of Jacob had been permitted to intermingle with the other families of mankind, the ancient promises made to the Fathers must have been dissipated and lost, and no proof, two thousand years afterwards, could have been produced that Jesus was of the seed of Abraham. But by the distinct account of the family

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family of Abraham, till the promulgation of the law; by the constitution of the Jewish republic, in which care was taken that not only the Jewish nation should be kept distinct from all others, but the genealogical registers of the particular families should be preserved, it was easy to trace up the pedigree of the Messiah to its source at the greatest distance of time, and shew that he was descended not only of Abraham, but from what particular family of his numerous posterity, through the whole series of generations. Add to this, that the civil constitution of the Jews, under whose authority the sacred books were kept, was a noble guard and security for the preservation and authenticity of the promises, and that the whole plan of ceremonial worship was so contrived, as to preserve the knowledge of the one true God, and to prefigure the person, the offices, and the blessings of the reign of the Messiah.

Besides, the revolutions which that singular people underwent, though we cannot explain the particular manner, were somehow connected with, and conducive to the completion of the grand scheme for which they

they were at first separated from the rest of the nations of the world. Nay, the revolutions of the other nations of the earth, the rise, the progress, the downfall, and the succession of empires, we have ground to believe, were so ordained and conducted, as to be subservient in some way, and in some degree, to the introduction of the glorious empire of truth and righteousness under the Son of God. We learn from the sacred books *, that the Persian monarchy, under Cyrus, was raised up to re-establish the Jews in their own land: their restoration to their own land, under their own laws, was necessary to accomplish the ancient prophecy, *That the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come* †. We are informed in many other passages of the sacred Writings, that other nations were employed as instruments in the hand of Providence to favour and to protect, or to chastise and punish, the chosen people; and these protections and chastisements contributed to spread the knowledge of the true God and the promises of the Messiah. When we attend to

* Isaiah, xlv. 4.

† Gen. xlix. 10.

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some of the ancient prophecies, particularly those of Daniel *, we find him describing the succession of the great empires as terminating in the establishment of the spiritual empire under the long expected Saviour. It has been frequently, and very justly, observed, that the union of so many great and populous kingdoms under the extensive empire of the Romans at our Saviour's birth, facilitated and hastened the wide propagation of his Divine religion.

These hints from Scripture, and observations upon Providence, together with many others which might be collected, seem to intimate, that all the amazing variety of revolutions among mankind in all nations and in all ages are so connected (though in a way incomprehensible to us), as to form one great scheme of universal Providence, the result and conclusion of which shall be, a happy and glorious establishment of all things under the empire of the Son of God.

To all which we may add, that not only the revolutions and successions of empires, but the course of learning, philosophy, and arts, were made subservient, under the di-

* Dan. ii. 34, 35.

rection of Providence, to the introduction of the true wisdom by the Revelation of the Gospel. Though philosophy, as has been already shown, did not conduct mankind to the true knowledge of God, yet we must not hence conclude that it was entirely useless. No! In the hand of God, it produced good effects, though unforeseen and unintended by the philosophers themselves. Their exposing the grosser instances of the poetical and popular religions, their teaching many excellent doctrines, and recommending many excellent virtues, were natural means of preparing the minds of men for embracing the truth, when fully displayed to their view. The turning the attention of mankind to moral and intellectual objects and inquiries, produces great effects upon their minds; it awakens them from the lethargy of gross sensuality; it abates the keenness of worldly pursuits; it spiritualizes them in some degree, and prepares them for receiving a more pure and refined institution of religion. The very spirit of inquiry, raised by philosophy, qualified men for searching into the meaning, importance, and evidence of Christianity;

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and consequently favoured the reception of it by fair and candid minds.

Thus all the great lines of Providence throughout the course of preceding ages, were directed towards, and centered in that great revolution, which, according to the eternal counsels of God, was to be accomplished by the Messiah. But as the whole scheme of Providence was not then completed, there is no reason to doubt, that it has been carrying on in a continual progress since that time, though we are unable to trace all the steps of it, and that it shall be carried on through succeeding ages, until its final completion. There is ground to believe, from the ancient prophecies, that the larger communication among mankind in all known parts of the globe, opened up in latter ages, is intended by Providence to prepare the way for spreading the knowledge of the Saviour over the face of the whole earth. The marvellous preservation of the Jews as a distinct people for such a long succession of ages, may be intended to serve some illustrious purposes of Providence with respect to the establishment of the divine revelation of Jesus in its full evidence

dence and universal prevalence among mankind. And if it be true, that the whole plan of Providence with respect to mankind was formed with a view to their restoration to purity, perfection, and happiness through Jesus Christ, and that all things all along have been conducted, and shall be conducted to the final accomplishment of this grand design; hence we see how justly Jesus may be said, in the emphatical language of Scripture, to be *the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all things.*

We proceed now to the last thing proposed, To point out the practical instructions flowing from what has been said.

In the *first* place, Is the Christian religion the great mean ordained by God before all ages to enlighten, to sanctify, and save such as believe? Hence we may learn not to be much afraid of the utmost efforts of scepticism and unbelief. We may be assured the schemes of Providence will be carried into execution in spite of all opposition that can possibly be given to them. No doubt, the labours of infidels will, on

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loose and thoughtless minds, have the most pernicious effects. This is to be lamented ; but the native goodness and excellence of the religion of Jesus is so striking, the prospects which it opens are so grand and rejoicing, and its evidence is so much adapted to make impression upon every fair and unprejudiced mind, that it is impossible any general revolution should ever be brought about against it. The attempts to discredit it, like other bad attempts, will be overruled by Providence, to promote the interests of that cause they were intended to destroy.

Secondly, Is the Gospel the plan formed by Divine wisdom for accomplishing the highest perfection and happiness of mankind ? Hence we may perceive the reason why faith is so peremptorily required and so much insisted on in the New Testament, as a term of our acceptance with God : The great and good Governor of the world may most certainly command his disobedient subjects to submit to that scheme, which his infinite wisdom has devised as the best of all others to deliver them from all the effects and consequences of their disobedience.

dience. Is it admitted, that he may reasonably require his rebellious subjects to repent of their rebellion, and return to their allegiance? Must it not likewise be admitted as equally just and reasonable, that he require them to comply with the utmost cheerfulness and gratitude with that method which his wisdom has contrived as the most effectual of all others to secure them in their duty for the time to come, to form them to a willing subjection to his authority, and to that temper and character which constitutes their highest perfection and felicity under his Divine administration. The command therefore to believe in Jesus, is as kind and merciful as it is just and reasonable. It is as much the happiness as it is the duty of mankind to yield obedience to it. Let us beware, lest we suffer ourselves to slide insensibly and without design into unbelief, from an unexamined persuasion that, if we adhere to natural religion, and endeavour to perform the duties which it prescribes, any attention to Christianity, or faith in it, is altogether superfluous and unnecessary. Let us consider, that we owe to the light which Christianity has spread

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in the world, those clear and settled views of the doctrines and precepts of natural religion, which we suppose to be all that is necessary for us to know and to practise; and if we do owe this knowledge to the instructions of Christianity, can any thing be more unreasonable or ungrateful, than not only to refuse to acknowledge the mighty benefit, but to pervert it into an argument for disregarding the great and kind Instructor?—Further, Is Jesus Christ constituted by God the Father, the sole enlightener of the world, the sole dispenser of spiritual blessings, and the sole Law-giver and Judge of mankind? Is he clearly revealed to us as standing invested in these high offices? If we refuse to acknowledge him in them, we are guilty of direct contempt of the authority of God who constituted him: And this is to act contrary to the first and fundamental principle of all natural religion—That God ought to be obeyed in all instances in which his authority is clearly interposed.

Again: Do these offices form a real and important relation betwixt Jesus Christ and those of mankind to whom he is made known?

known? If we refuse to act suitably to these relations, and to perform the duties arising from them, we act contrary to an obligation of the same moral kind with that which belongs to any other relation; and consequently our disregarding this obligation is as truly an act of immorality and a violation of natural religion, as our disregarding the duties which arise from the relations betwixt man and man would be. Further still: Has God chosen to communicate light, purity, and comfort to mankind by Jesus Christ? Has he chosen this method not of mere arbitrary pleasure, but as the wisest and best one possible for promoting their happiness? If we refuse to accept the favours of God, in that way in which he hath appointed them to be bestowed, we can have no reason to complain if we are deprived of them, and if we are subjected to the punishments due to those who reject their own mercies. Our Saviour has declared in a solemn manner, *That we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in him.* John, xv. 4. And indeed it must be so, since he is the appointed Enlightener of the world, the Conductor of men to virtue,

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tue, to glory and immortality. It is true, indeed, that the Christian religion spreads through society such a light and such beneficial influence, that even those who reject it partake of its effects, and may be, in some degree, influenced by it. But these effects and this influence must be very inconsiderable, when compared with what a proper attention to its doctrines, its laws, its examples, its promises, and its threatenings, must have on those who lay open their minds to the full impressions of them. And we are assured, that as Jesus is the light of the world, those who follow after him shall not *walk in darkness*, but *shall have the light of life*. John, viii. 12.

Thirdly, Is Christianity the great, the wise, and effectual mean ordained by God of saving those that believe? Hence we may infer, that it is the duty of every one to whom it is made known, not only to receive it himself, and lay open his own mind to its sacred influence; but to promote the submission of the rest of mankind to it, to the utmost of his power. It is an acknowledged maxim, that those in higher life,
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who possess riches, rank, or authority, are bound to employ the weight and influence of their example, and every other means in their power, to promote the happiness of the society of which they are members. If Christianity is by the appointment of Providence the best and wisest scheme of rendering mankind happy, both in the present and in a future life, then certainly all those whom Providence has placed in superior stations, in order to be examples and directors to the inferior classes of mankind, are under the most sacred obligations to exert themselves, in the most hearty and vigorous manner, to promote the influence of Christianity in the hearts and lives of all around them. As they are the servants of Providence, they ought to look upon it as their greatest honour and happiness, as well as their duty, to concur with its great and good designs. It is obvious to every one, that the united influence of those in high life, would have a very great effect to support and to spread a just sense of religion among the lower ranks of men. The mere neglecting to exert their influence, though it is only an omission of duty, yet being
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an omission attended with very extensive bad consequences, it must be criminal in the sight of God, and must expose the guilty persons to deserved punishment under his all-righteous administration.

But of all other orders of men, the ministers of Jesus Christ are under the most awful obligations to promote the belief and acceptance of the Gospel Revelation. They are called by the voice of God, by the voice of society, to spend their time and exert all their faculties in inculcating the truth, the importance, the excellency of the Christian religion, and in spreading its influence every where around them. Let us then be just to our office. As we are sent of God, and retained by men, to this service, let us be wholly devoted to its sacred interests. Let God and man be witnesses that we are faithful.

Let us always remember that it is the revelation of the will of God that we are called to teach, that it is by this revelation that God intended before all ages to enlighten and save those that believe, and that it was by this revelation that the world was actually *turned from darkness unto light,*
and

and from the power of Sin and Satan to the service of the Living God, when human eloquence and wisdom were found ineffectual. Let us work then after the model which Providence has given, and preach the same Gospel that the Apostles preached. That Gospel which was the wisdom and power of God, producing most astonishing effects, in the conversion of the world, seventeen hundred years ago, is the same *wisdom* and the same *power* still. To attempt to instruct or reform the world on any other plan, is to prefer our own schemes and views to those of an all-wise Providence. If we fall in with the method Infinite Wisdom has devised, we may depend upon the favourable concurrence of Providence; and, on that energy of Divine Grace which accompanied the Gospel at its first publication, and which we are assured will accompany it in some degree in all ages. But if we follow methods of our own invention; if we adopt the philosophical schemes, either of ancient or modern times, we have nothing to rely upon but the poor effects of our own art or eloquence. Let us therefore look upon ourselves as sacredly bound

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bound to teach the real doctrines of Christianity in their original purity and simplicity, and to apply them to those great ends of the purification and consolation of the souls of men, for which they were revealed and published to the world.

It is very observable, that we do not find in any part of the Scriptures, that the doctrines of religion are ever laid down as mere speculative principles, but are always introduced, either as motives to the practice of some duty, or as grounds of peace and comfort to our minds. And if this is the constant strain of the Scriptures, it is an instructive lesson to us, what ought to be the strain of our preaching. If the Word of God has connected the doctrines, and the practice of religion together, it must be our indispensable duty never to separate them. And in truth there cannot be a better or higher encomium made upon the Sacred Scriptures than this, that they are wholly practical.

In like manner let us consider ourselves as lying under an equally indispensable obligation to preach the morality of the Gospel, on the principles, and in the manner,

ner, in which Jesus and his Apostles, our unerring guides, have taught it. Agreeably to our Saviour's doctrine, let us always remember, that a regard to God is the first commandment of the law, and the highest obligation upon the human mind. Piety, therefore, must not be inculcated merely as a means towards an end, but as an end itself. The influence of devout regards to God on all the other parts of our duty, such as strengthening the social dispositions and enforcing the obligation of every branch of virtue, is acknowledged to be highly valuable. But we must not place the whole value of piety on this influence, however real and important it may be. Piety is a primary and essential part of duty in itself, considered as independent of its effects on the other virtues of the Christian life. And as it is an original and essential part of duty, it is equally essential to our happiness. We cannot conceive any state, or any stage of existence, in which a dependent being can be happy without just views of its Maker, and the exercise of proper dispositions towards him. On the other hand, all the other virtues of the
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Christian life must be taught as parts, or instances, of the duty which we owe to God. Doing the will of God, or keeping the commandments of God, is the general view under which our Saviour and his Apostles have chosen to represent the whole duty of man. The commanding ideas of a law, and of a Supreme Lawgiver, to whom we are accountable, and who will reward and punish according to our deserts, are absolutely necessary for mankind, a set of creatures liable to be seduced from their duty and happiness by the impulses of a thousand irregular passions.

All the other views under which human duty can be conceived, such as something intrinsically excellent, as something perfectly beautiful, becoming or honourable, or as entire propriety of sentiment and behaviour, and such like as carry no reference to the will and authority of God, are quite unfit to govern such creatures as mankind, or perhaps any created beings, in any state, or any stage of their existence. And as that kind of virtue which disclaims all dependance on any thing beyond itself, is quite unsuitable to the subjects of God, so
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whatever air of strength, of purity, and disinterestedness it may put on, it will be found to be incapable to support itself under great trials, and to be accompanied with a certain pride and self-sufficiency, quite inconsistent with the character of dependent beings, and with that disinterestedness of which it boasts.

Again : When we inculcate the morals of Christianity, let us take care to follow that order in which our Saviour, who knew the nature of man, and all the natural connections of things, has placed them. We read that he began his Gospel with a solemn call to repentance : The first maxim of his Divine Sermon on the Mount, is, *Blessed are the poor in spirit* : And in other parts of the Gospel History, we find him assuring us in the most solemn manner, *that unless we humble ourselves, and become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God*. These things plainly intimate, that in his view of things, which was always according to truth, *humility* is the true foundation of all other virtues. It has, indeed, the most extensive influence to promote their improvement ; it is there-

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fore a fundamental article in the moral system of the Gospel, though neglected, if not entirely omitted, in other systems of morality, both ancient and modern, not copied from it. That clear views, and habitual impressions of our condition as dependent, frail, indigent, mortal, and as corrupted and guilty creatures, are the true sources of humility, will be readily admitted.

It will also appear evident to every one who gives the least degree of attention to the workings of the human heart, that as soon as the mind is brought under these humbling views of itself, it easily and naturally flows out in acts of piety and devotion to God, and in emotions of pity, tenderness, and charity to mankind. It were easy to shew, that the humble temper of mind carries a natural propension to equity of disposition and behaviour, to meekness, candour and forgiveness, to patience and contentment with our lot in the world, and to moderation under the greatest flow of worldly prosperity: It is likewise obvious, without a particular illustration, that the humble state of mind naturally corrects and
restrains

restrains the excesses and irregularities of self-love and self-will, which are the fruitful parents of pride, hatred, malice, envy, and of the whole tribe of unsocial and malignant passions. That the humble mind is best disposed for receiving the glad tidings of the Gospel, can scarcely be doubted. Now, surely that state of mind which is so favourable to the exercise of all the finer dispositions, and which checks and suppresses the baser ones, must not only be consistent with the exercise of the more shining virtues of love to a country, public spirit, patriotism, magnanimity, generosity, heroism, and the rest of that order, but must be the best foundation on which they can be raised. Some persons who pretend to be philosophers have so confounded all their moral notions, as to imagine humility and greatness of mind are inconsistent, and even to represent humility as connected with meanness and baseness of spirit. That there is no foundation for this charge will manifestly appear if we consider, *First*, That the true notion of meanness or baseness in a man, is something in his sentiment and behaviour below the dignity of

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his nature: And *next*, That one of the principal sources of humility is a consciousness that we are sinners, or that we fall below that standard of moral perfection, which is set before us in the law of God, and in conformity to which our highest honour and dignity consist: Now, to assert that a man who carries about with him the purest standard of moral conduct, and mourns over every instance in which he departs from it, must, upon that account, be inclined to think and act in a way below the dignity of his nature, seems to be a very unphilosophical kind of reasoning. To make use of a similar instance, it is just as if one should assert that a man who has formed the purest and highest ideal notion of what is just and excellent in writing must, for that very reason, be mean and groveling in his compositions. The more accurately we observe the operations of the human heart, and the connexions between the dispositions of it, we shall be so much the more fully persuaded that it is the soundest philosophy as well as sound divinity, that genuine humility is the true soil in which all the other virtues must be planted,

planted, and in which alone they can thrive and grow up to their full maturity and perfection. Thus I hope it appears, that it is a matter of real importance, that we inculcate the morality of the Gospel, on the principles of the Gospel, and in the manner and order it directs.

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Time will not allow me to treat more particularly the importance of enforcing the moral duties of life, from the peculiar motives Divine Revelation suggests. Let us study human nature, and study the doctrines of the Gospel, and we shall find that they tally to one another. And as, in this study, we shall be employed in that way which our duty and the propriety of our character require, so we shall find the true sources of Christian oratory will open themselves to our view.

To conclude, let us, who are the ministers of the Gospel, beware of satisfying ourselves with admiring and extolling the excellency of the Gospel morality; but let it be our chief care to copy the perfect pattern of our great Master, in all the virtues of his life, and especially in that

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meekness and humility which he exemplified in the character of an instructor, and has enjoined us to imitate in the same character. *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly in heart* *. He manifested the full power of this blessed disposition in that unruffled sweetness and mildness with which he bore the slowness of understanding, the unbelief, and the many weaknesses of his own disciples, as well as all the outrages and provocations of his most inveterate enemies.

As meekness ought to adorn our whole behaviour, so it should particularly shine forth in our public, and even in our private instructions. A small degree of acquaintance with the world, and of insight into human nature, will convince us that every thing unfriendly, every thing biting and satirical, every tincture of the sour and angry passions appearing in our sentiments, our words, or even our manner and gesture, as it is contrary to the meek spirit of the Gospel and its author, so it must hurt the good effect of the best instructions we can give. *Instruct*, says the Apostle, *those*

* Matt. xi. 29.

who

*who oppose themselves in meekness**. Let us be particularly careful to cherish kind, friendly, and candid thoughts and designs towards our brethren, and keep at the utmost distance from all ungenerous or unjust insinuations, which tend to lessen their character or usefulness. Let us always be so much on our guard as never to speak a word, or write a line, that can mark the least departure from the kind, meek and candid spirit of our holy religion: If we are not, the more discerning part of mankind at least will conclude, that our hearts must be under very bad discipline when we cannot, during the time of the composition or delivery of a sermon, suppress the workings of the little, the selfish, and party passions. Besides, they will be apt to say, and not without some foundation, that though the speaker or writer intended indeed only to draw a picture of others not at all to their advantage, yet he hath really drawn a truer and blacker one of his own heart.

In like manner let us imitate the humility of our great Master. In order to this, we must watch over our own tempers, lest

* 2 Tim. ii. 25.

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we insensibly set too great a value on our station, our parts, our learning, or labours; and, at the same time, we must watch over our behaviour, so that true humility may discover itself in our intercourse with all ranks of men, the lowest as well as the highest. As the lower classes of men must always compose the greatest part of the body of mankind, whom we are called to instruct; so, if we condemn those for whom our instructions and labours are principally designed, we can never discharge our duty to them with faithfulness or success. It should further be considered, that our humility ought to appear in the manner in which we hold and deliver our sentiments and opinions. There is a pulpit modesty which is very beautiful and engaging, as there is a pulpit pride extremely disagreeable and disgusting. Nothing can make a more odious appearance than pride preaching up humility, and a man describing himself as exceeding little, when it plainly appears he has an idea of himself as exceeding great.

In order to preserve a proper modesty as to our notions and sentiments about things of

of doubtful disputation, and the circum-
stantials of religion, and to abate that po-
sitiveness in our own way, which is so
opposite to real humility, and which leads
us to complain of the pride of other men's
understandings, when there is no other
reason for the charge than that they cannot
adopt our notions or phrases; let us seri-
ously ask ourselves the following questions:
Can I pretend to a clearer understanding,
to a more diligent and impartial inquiry
into Revelation, or to greater degrees of Di-
vine illumination, than all others who differ
in opinion from me? What grounds have
I to imagine I am in the full possession of all
Divine truths? Do I not acknowledge that
I may err? What security then have I that
I do not actually err, in some instances,
amidst the multitude of opinions which I
hold? May I not be in a mistake, nay in
many mistakes, though I am not conscious
of the particular instances? Is there not
ground to expect that the admission into
the regions of perfect light, will prove not
only an enlargement, but a correction of
former views, to men of the wisest, best,
and

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and fairest minds? Such questions seriously put, and urged upon our own consciences in silence and retirement, and under the awful impression of the presence of the Great Searcher of hearts, would naturally check that presumptuous confidence, that our own particular views are certainly right, which is so common in the world, and so frequently accompanied with that *wrath of man, which never works the righteousness of God*. Such serious soliloquies would lead us to suspect, that we are departing from the meekness and humility of the Gospel spirit, when we allow ourselves to think and to speak hardly of others because they do not see every thing just in the same light with us, or have not freedom to express themselves in our phrases, which are perhaps not only unscriptural, but were unknown in the Christian church for many centuries, and can claim no better nor higher original than the dregs of the scholastic philosophy. There may be phrases not strictly scriptural, which must be acknowledged to be venerable by their hoary antiquity; but even these ought not to be too much urged

urged upon honest and tender minds. May what has been said have its due weight and influence upon us all! SERM.
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We now conclude the whole with the Apostolic direction, *Let us meditate on these things, let us give ourselves wholly to them, that our profiting may appear unto all: Let us take heed unto ourselves, and to our doctrine, continuing in them; for in so doing, we shall save ourselves, and them that hear us.*

S E R M O N VIII.

The Excellency of the Spirit of Christianity,

Preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating
Christian Knowledge, at their Anniversary Meeting, in
the High Church of Edinburgh, on Friday June 5, 1767.

2 TIMOTHY, i. 7.

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear ;
but of power, and of love, and of a sound
mind.*

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IT is very probable that the Apostle wrote this second Epistle to Timothy in the time of the persecution of the Christians in the reign of the Roman emperor Nero, and when he was himself a prisoner at Rome, and had a near prospect of suffering as a martyr for his religion*.

* See Dr. Benson's history of the state of things when this epistle was written, prefixed to his paraphrase and notes on the epistle.

In this mournful and distressing situation, he addresses this epistle to Timothy. He had converted Timothy to the Christian faith; he had appointed him to the sacred office of an Evangelist, and had imparted to him the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Apostle, therefore, may be considered in this epistle as giving his dying * charge to his favourite disciple, and devolving upon him the work of the Gospel before he left the world.

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In the verse before the text, he exhorts Timothy to stir up the gift of God that was in him. The word in the original, which is translated *stir up*, signifies, properly, To blow up a fire to a more intense degree of heat than it had before: so that the meaning and import of the exhortation is, "Cultivate and improve, to the best advantage, the spiritual gifts with which you are endowed; and exert all your faculties and talents to the utmost, in the faithful discharge of the duties of that great office in which you are engaged." And, in the words of the text, he enforces the exhortation from a consideration taken from

* Chap. iv. 5, 6, 7, 8.

the

SERM. the nature and genius of Christianity itself,
 VIII. *verse 7. For God hath not given us the
 spirit of fear; but of power, and of love,
 and of a sound mind.* That is, God hath
 not given us Christians the spirit of timi-
 dity and cowardice, of selfishness and ma-
 lignity, of levity and folly; but he hath
 given us the spirit of firmness and cou-
 rage, of benignity and love, of wisdom
 and sobriety of mind.

It appears from the verse after the text,
 and from many other passages in this epistle,
 that the Apostle had full in his eye those
 labours, hardships, and sufferings, which
 he foresaw Timothy would be called to
 endure in the course of his ministry.
 And, in this view, he exhorts him to pre-
 pare and fortify himself for those exertions
 of courage and zeal, and for the exercise
 of that prudence and discretion for which
 he would have frequent occasion in those
 circumstances of perplexity, danger, and
 distress, in which he would find himself
 involved: at the same time he assures him
 that the spirit of the Gospel would enable
 him to suffer afflictions, and behave under
 them with that patience, modesty, and
 meekness

meekness of wisdom, which becomes one who is persecuted for righteousness sake.

It is hoped it will not be unsuitable to the design of this assembly, to offer some observations tending to illustrate and confirm the assertions in the text, with a view to display the excellency of the Gospel as the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. We shall consider each of these in their order.

First, Christianity is the spirit of power, or of courage and firmness, in opposition to timidity and irresolution of mind.

Among the many other groundless charges which have been brought against Christianity, it has been accused of inculcating servitude and dependence. A very celebrated author, who, in other parts of his works, appears to be a lover of the morality of the Gospel, and an admirer of the character of its great founder, has expressly asserted, *That the spirit of the Gospel is favourable to tyrants; and that true Christians are formed for slaves**. And several other writers, though they

* Rousseau, Social Contract, Book iv. chap. 8.

admit

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admit that the Christian religion softens and sweetens the temper and manners of mankind; yet allege, that, at the same time, it enervates their courage, and disposes them for mean and slavish obedience.

In answer to these, and other accusations of the like nature, let it be observed, in the *first* place, That, if we may form a judgment of the spirit of Christianity from the spirit of its author, we must acknowledge it to be a spirit of courage and boldness, and not of fearfulness and timidity. For it appears, in the most incontestible manner, from the whole history of our Saviour's life, that, while he supported the best of all causes, he set himself, though single, in a most intrepid manner, in opposition to a whole nation. And he persevered in doing this, though he had a clear foresight that his doing so would bring him to certain death, and to a death too of the most formidable kind. It is hard to say, what complete *heroism* is, if this is not an instance of it.

His first disciples, in like manner, discovered a spirit of the most active and determined courage. We read, in the fourth chapter

chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that when the Jewish Sanhedrim, the supreme council of the nation, called the Apostles Peter and John before them, and commanded them, verse 18. *Not to teach in the name of Jesus*; verse 19. *They answered and said unto them, Whether is it right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard*: and they accordingly went out from the council, and preached the Gospel with all boldness. And we read in the same chapter, that even their enemies were struck with admiration when they beheld the firmness of their resolution: verse 13. *When the members of the council saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus*; that is, they perceived they had learned boldness and intrepidity in his school.

If your time would allow us to trace the spirit of Christianity as it appeared in the primitive Christians, we should find, that persons of all ranks, sexes, and ages, shewed

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such an unshaken firmness and fortitude, under the severest trials, even death itself, as filled their very enemies and persecutors with astonishment.

It is worthy of observation, in the *second* place, that, if we may judge of the spirit of the Gospel from the strain of its precepts, we must also conclude it to be a spirit of resolution and fortitude. The New Testament abounds with the warmest exhortations to Christians to exert the utmost firmness in withstanding the temptations and encountering the dangers to which they may be exposed. Thus, 1 Corinth. xvi. 13. *Stand fast, says the Apostle, quit ye like men, and be strong.* And in the epistle to the Ephesians, chap. vi. from the 10th to the 19th verse, *Be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might; put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* And further, it deserves our particular attention, that these exhortations are often enforced with motives taken from the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. As, for instance, in the xvth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle, after a most sublime

lime and animating description of the glory of the resurrection-state, concludes with a pathetic exhortation to immoveable firmness in every good work: therefore, says he, *Be stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

But, not to rest the vindication of our holy religion from the imputation of a mean and slavish spirit, merely on the precepts of it, or on the example of its great Author and its first followers, let it be observed,

In the *third* place, That the unfeigned belief and sincere practice of the Christian religion has an obvious and manifest tendency to inspire such zeal and courage, as will dispose men to act with resolution and firmness in every worthy cause. This will appear very evidently, if we attend to the two following particulars: 1st, That Christianity is the best preservative from all those things which damp the vigour of the mind, and enervate its active powers; and, 2^{dly}, That it supplies the most powerful incitements to act every worthy part in

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life in the firmest and most vigorous manner.

Now there are three things which chiefly check the vigour of the mind, and render it timid and irresolute. These are, a consciousness of mean and guilty conduct; unmanly habits of indulgence in effeminate pleasures; and a prevailing melancholy of temper.

It is not surely necessary to spend time in showing that the first of these, I mean the consciousness of base and unworthy behaviour, is an intimidating and dispiriting thing. Every one knows, that guilt is in its own nature the source of self-condemnation, and of dread of deserved punishment; that it naturally fills the countenance with shame, and the heart with terror; and that, when the mind is under the influence of these enfeebling passions, it must be timid and dejected, and incapable either of forming or of executing any manly and worthy design. It is likewise obvious to every one, that those who have imbibed the spirit of Christianity will be preserved from those presumptuous sins which strike terror into the conscience; and that

that they will have such trust in the promises of the Gospel for the pardon of their involuntary failings, as will establish them in peace of mind, and in the humble hope of the favour and acceptance of God. In this peaceful state of mind, they will be in full possession of their active powers, and ready to exert them whenever and wherever duty calls. The experience of all ages verifies the observation of Solomon, *That the wicked fly when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion.* Prov. xxviii. 1.

Again; That unmanly habits of indulgence in pleasure soften and enervate men's minds, and make them fly from every scene where labour and fatigue, where activity or boldness are required, has ever been admitted as a certain truth; a truth to which daily experience and the history of all ages bear testimony. But that all irregular indulgence in pleasure is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, is abundantly evident from the whole tenor of the New Testament. It commands *us to be lovers of God more than lovers of pleasure, and to set our affections on the things above, and not on the things on the earth.* It every-

where enjoins moderation and temperance, and forbids, in the most particular and in the most awful manner, all excesses in worldly pleasures of every kind. The Apostle, towards the beginning of the second chapter * of this Epistle, exhorts Timothy in the most earnest manner *to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* The examples too which our holy religion sets before us, are further proofs of the standing opposition betwixt the spirit of Christianity and every kind of mean and unmanly indulgence: *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, says the Apostle, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away †.*

And, lastly, Every one's own experience assures him, that nothing deadens the active powers of the mind more effectually than a melancholy cast of temper: for, when this disposition becomes prevalent, it renders men timid and apprehensive to such a degree, as unfits them for the ordinary affairs of life, and much more for encoun-

* Verses 1. 3.

† 1 Cor. ix. 27.

tering the difficulties and dangers of any great or hazardous undertaking. It must be owned, that when this gloomy disposition becomes a disease settled in the constitution, it is perhaps altogether incurable. But, in so far as principles of reason, just sentiments, and comfortable views, can have any power to give relief, the religion of Jesus is the most effectual remedy.

The doctrines of the Gospel are admirably adapted to establish the heart in peace and joy. The views which it gives us of the perfections and government of God in general, of the scheme of redemption in particular, of this state as introductory to a better one, and of the distresses of life, *as bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, are like rays of light breaking through a thick gloom to cheer and gladden the disconsolate soul. When the real Christian contemplates the honourable relations in which he stands to his God and his Saviour; and when, with a mixture of faith and humility, he looks forward to his eternal honours in the kingdom of heaven, he is inspired with

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an elevation and gladness of heart, which dissipates gloomy thoughts, and fits him for the worthiest and most vigorous exercise of his active powers. This joyous temper was very prevalent among the first Christians, *believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory**. *Being justified by faith, they had peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but they gloried in tribulation†*. Thus it appears, that the spirit of Christianity is the best security against those things, which are the chief obstructions to the exertion of our powers with cheerfulness and vigour to the best purposes of life and society.

But the spirit of Christianity not only delivers the human mind from those things which benumb its active powers, and bereave it of its resolution and fortitude; but it also supplies the most powerful incitements that can be conceived to act every worthy and honourable part in life, however difficult or dangerous, in the most vigorous and undaunted manner. This was the *second* thing asserted.

* 1 Pet. i. 13.

† Rom. v. 1, 2, 3.

In order to illustrate and confirm this point, let us attend to the principles and motives by which Christians ought to be animated in the course of their lives and actions.

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Here it is manifest, that, in proportion as a man has imbibed the spirit of Christianity, he will have a warm and strong sense of the excellence of all the virtues of the Christian life, and of the best affections to God and man. It will surely be admitted, that all the virtues comprehended in the apostolical summary of Christian morality, *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,* are the objects of supreme affection, and habitual and delightful meditation, to every true Christian. All who are justly intitled to this character, contemplate these Christian virtues in a variety of lights; which cannot fail to animate, to elevate, and fortify their minds in a very remarkable manner. They always conceive of them as supremely excellent in their own nature, as agreeable to the all-perfect will of God, and as of indispensable and eternal obligation.

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obligation. They live and act under a full and most delightful persuasion that the exercise of these heavenly virtues not only constitutes the chief perfection, happiness, and glory of human nature, but also forms it into a resemblance of the Divine nature itself; and from this persuasion of the supreme dignity and excellence of these virtues, ardent desires immediately spring up to be possessed of them to the highest degree that the nature and situation of mankind in this world are capable of: and these desires again immediately excite resolutions of practising them with unvariable constancy, and of cultivating them with the utmost ardor and assiduity.

Now every one who has attended to the finer and nobler workings of the human heart, when purified by the grace of God, must be convinced that a warm love of that moral excellence, which is the chief glory of the Divine nature itself, earnest breathings after nearer approaches to the perfection of it, a lively sense of duty, a full conviction that the doing that duty is the will of God, and strong impulses of the friendly and public affections, are, without
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all doubt, the most powerful and commanding principles in the human breast. When they unite their force, and operate with all their strength, nothing can withstand them. If we attend to what passes in life, we shall see the most convincing proofs of this: For whenever a mind, under the influence of these great principles, has its views fixed upon some great or good end, in the prosecution of which opposition, difficulty, or danger is foreseen, then holy Christian resolution exerts itself with its whole strength; and, indeed, becomes in a manner invincible, so that hardly any difficulty or danger can stand before it. And we may easily conceive how it should be so, when we reflect upon the illustrious and mighty supports which our worthy resolutions receive from the exercise of Christian faith and piety. The full assurance of Divine approbation and aid, must ever inspire the soul with confidence and alacrity in acting that part which truth and integrity require.

It is impossible, even in imagination, to conceive any thing better calculated for emboldening the human mind, and supporting

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porting its most determined resolutions, than the firm persuasion that the Divine administration is ever on the side of righteousness, and that the righteous man shall be most amply and gloriously rewarded for whatever he may have suffered for his adherence to it. When he looks forward, and reflects upon his dignity *as one of the sons of God, that it doth not yet appear what he shall be, and that when his Saviour appears, he shall appear with him in glory**, he is not only encouraged to persevere in his virtuous course, but he feels himself inspired with a noble ambition to maintain a character suitable to such an exalted relation, and such glorious hopes. Under the full influence of these animating views, all the clamour and evil speaking, all the reproaches and unjust censures of the world, and even all the dangers that may threaten, will not discourage him, or make him desist and give way. *He will wait patiently upon God, will commit his way to him, and triumph in the certain prospect that God will bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day*†. Conscious of

* 1 John, iii. 1, &c.

† Psalm xxxvii. 5, 6.

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his honest endeavours to do his duty, though amidst many weakneses and infirmities, he solaces himself with the modest but triumphant hope, through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, that all his good intentions, all his secret acts of goodness, all his silent sufferings and struggles, and all his services, are recorded, and shall be one day published, honoured, and rewarded, on the grandest of all theatres, before an assembled world. These hopes cheer and gladden, and at the same time strengthen his heart, in the hour of danger, in the day of distress, and in the prosecution of every virtuous design. He has a firm reliance on the promises of the Gospel, that he shall be enabled to *do all things through Christ strengthening him, and that at last he shall be a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, and invited to sit down with Jesus on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with the Father on his throne.*

Now, it will certainly be acknowledged, that *those noble principles of action*, supported with *those glorious motives* (both which have just now been described), are the fittest that can be conceived to inspire such a serene
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and steady fortitude, as will encounter every difficulty and danger, and even death itself, in the most undaunted manner. It is extremely obvious, that when the minds of Christians are under the real dominion of these great principles of their religion, they are prepared to put in practice that magnanimous lesson of their Great Master, *not to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more they can do: but to fear him, who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast both body and soul into hell-fire.* And wherever this superiority to the fear of man; and the fear of temporal evils and dangers, flows from the principles of the Gospel, it will be accompanied with a noble freedom and independence of soul, that can never dwell with mean and slavish principles. Men, though in the lowest station of life, who have a just sense of the dignity of human nature, and of those Christian virtues which dignify it, will discover, on proper occasions, a strength and greatness of mind, which will make them disdain every thing that approaches in any degree to meanness, cowardice, or slavish fear.

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To all which we may add, as sufficiently clear, without a particular illustration, that a courage derived from these principles and motives, which have been described, will be more rational and vigorous, more firm and permanent, than that which flows merely from animal spirits, from external accidents, from the love of glory, or from what the world calls a sense of honour.

Some perhaps will object to all that has been said, "That superstitious notions of religion, and a fancied approbation of the Deity, will excite some men to perpetrate the very worst and vilest actions, in as firm and undaunted a manner as the best Christians can perform the worthiest and noblest." To this it may be answered, That it must be owned, that when the minds of men are under the influence of false opinions, which they conceive to be countenanced by Heaven, they will be daring and intrepid to an amazing degree. But surely false persuasions sometimes producing very great effects, is no proof that just principles will not produce equal or superior ones more certainly and more uniformly. Besides, to a discerning eye, there
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are marks which distinguish those acts of magnanimity and courage which are inspired by the principles of true religion, from those which proceed from the delusions of superstition. The former are calm and serene: the latter are fierce and turbulent. The first kind are modest and unaffected; the second are vain and ostentatious. The one sort, springing from an enlightened understanding and a pure heart, leave behind them a true peace of mind, which can never be extinguished or diminished; but the other sort, proceeding from an understanding darkened by superstition or corrupt passions, leave behind them only an ill-grounded and delusive satisfaction, which the first glimpse of truth must dissipate and destroy.

Others, perhaps, will object to what has been said, "That the tendency of Christianity is only to form men to a kind of passive courage or patience under sufferings; but that it has no tendency to form them to that active courage which distinguishes the hero from the confessor." Let it suffice to answer to this objection, That that unremitting zeal and activity which

which prompted the Apostle Paul, for instance, to spend thirty years in journeys by land, voyages by sea, amidst numberless difficulties, dangers, and sufferings, to propagate Christianity, would have operated in the same manner, and excited to the like indefatigable labours and efforts, if Providence had called him to defend his country, to support the rights and privileges of mankind, or to prosecute any other worthy undertaking. It seems natural to conceive, that a magnanimity and activity of mind, which were manifested in such an uniform and conspicuous manner through the whole of the Apostle's life, in promoting one great cause, would have displayed themselves in a similar way, if he had been engaged in any other important cause, which reason, religion, and the good of mankind would justify and recommend.

Your time will not permit me to shew, as a further answer to the objection, That all the finer principles and affections of the human mind impel to action in the most spontaneous manner, and even in face of opposition and danger of the most formidable kind.—That the Gospel strengthens

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these natural principles, and encourages the most active efforts in every worthy cause; and that it is only when sufferings for a good cause cannot be avoided by righteous means, that the spirit of the Gospel manifests itself in *perfect works of patience*.

Upon the whole, from the view which hath been given of the principles and precepts of Christianity, and of the spirit of its great Founder, we may conclude, that it is a *spirit of power, and not of fear*. And, indeed, we may safely challenge the brightest genius, in ancient or modern times, to invent a system of principles which shall be more adapted to inspire magnanimity and courage of the most exalted kind. And, if it is impossible to devise any scheme which shall excel Christianity in this respect, all the accusations of it, as encouraging a mean and dastardly spirit, as promoting slavish principles of any kind, should be condemned as altogether false and groundless.

The power of prejudice, in giving the most unnatural turn to the plainest things, is very surprising. The author quoted in the beginning of this discourse, in the same chapter which is there referred to, alleges, that

that the true Christian's faith of another world, and a better life, extinguishes all concern in him for this present world, and this present life; or, at least, that it renders him incapable of any brave and courageous efforts to preserve or promote any advantages that relate only to such a transitory state. But he has given no reason that can convince any unprejudiced person that a Christian, though of the most elevated and heavenly turn of mind, must have a less warm and delicate sense of the liberties, or of any of the just privileges of mankind, or must have less zeal for the interests of his country, his family, or friends, merely on the account of his lively hopes of another and better life beyond the grave.

Besides, when we reflect that a main part of the duty of a Christian, according to the principles of his religion, lies in doing good, in promoting the happiness of others to the utmost of his power, it is not easy to conceive how his firm hopes of immortality should render him indifferent to his duty, and incapable of all vigorous and manly efforts to discharge

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it. It seems to be a more natural conclusion, that the firm hopes of a future glorious life would animate the real Christian to discharge his duty with the utmost faithfulness, and, particularly, would dispose him to labour with the utmost vigour to do good to his brethren of mankind, though it should be at the expence of a transient and uncertain life, that is soon to be succeeded by a permanent and eternal one. That is certainly the doctrine of the Gospel, which declares in the most express manner, *That Christians ought to lay down their lives for the brethren*, 1 John, iii. 16. Such authors as throw out these and the like unjust reflections upon the Christian religion, are either totally unacquainted with its native purity and excellence, as it lies in the New Testament, or they are greatly deficient in that fairness and candour of mind which ought to be a primary qualification in those who assume to themselves the office of instructors of the world at large.

Again, we may further infer, from the view which has been given of the principles of action recommended by the Gospel, that
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those who profess themselves admirers of magnanimity, bravery, and that high order of virtues, ought to be consistent with themselves, and admire Christianity, which affords the best supports, and the finest examples of them. Nay, if they would wish not merely to admire these shining virtues in speculation, but to practise them in real life, let them lay open their minds to the full influence of the spirit of the Gospel. Those clear views of duty, and those striking and glorious motives to the practice of it, which the Gospel sets before them, are the most effectual means of forming their minds to a firmness and fortitude of the most excellent kind.

To conclude, let all of us be careful to nourish our souls with the spirit of the Gospel; so that, deriving strength and vigour from it, we may on all occasions exert true fortitude in resisting every thing that is evil, and cleaving to every thing that is good. Let us be ever on our guard against, and endeavour to withstand, in the most determined manner, every impulse of ungoverned passion, every temptation to a departure from that equity of disposition,

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that benignity of temper, that purity of heart, and that integrity of life, which becomes the disciples of the holy Jesus. Particularly, let us arm ourselves with manly resolution, to despise that scorn and ridicule which the vicious and unprincipled take a pleasure in employing, to seduce the unguarded and unexperienced into the snares of vice, or into a neglect and contempt of all religion.

We ought always to remember, that though we are not called to the national senate to shew our resolution and firmness, in opposing public measures which we conceive hurtful to the state, nor into the field of battle to signalize our bravery, nor to the scaffold of martyrdom to prove our constancy and fortitude, there are abundance of other opportunities in the daily intercourses of society, and ordinary train of life, for the most important exertions of courage and manhood. Private and ordinary life is the field of battle, where every Christian is called to exercise his courage *in fighting the good fight of faith*. It is here we must learn to conquer ourselves, and to establish an empire in our own bosoms

over every mean, every sensual, every selfish, and every worldly passion. The victories gained here, though concealed from the eyes of men, may be more signal and glorious in the sight of God, than those that are gained in the most conspicuous and most admired scenes of public life. The maxim of Solomon, *That he that ruleth his own spirit is mightier than he that taketh a city*, is a fundamental maxim of all sound philosophy, as well as of Christian morality. The conquest over bad propensities, inclinations, and habits, is the first step of the Christian life. And, when this is obtained, the nobler principles of the heart will operate with ease and freedom, and display their power through the various scenes of life, in the steadfast prosecution of every thing virtuous and praise-worthy.

Before I proceed to the *second* assertion in the text, permit me to suggest, that it particularly becomes those who are associated for the noble purpose of propagating Christian knowledge, to exert themselves with vigour in that honourable and important work. They ought to suffer nothing to disconcert or discourage them, but

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to animate one another from the encouraging consideration in the text, That God hath not given Christians the spirit of fear, but of power, and suffer nothing to disconcert or discourage them: they may rest fully assured, that the spirit of that religion, which it is the end of their association to promote, is the power of *God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

Our Saviour himself has plainly intimated, that the Gospel is the great mean which the wisdom of Providence has chosen to enlighten, to sanctify, to bless, and to save mankind. *No man, says he, knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.* At another time he declares, in like manner, *That no man cometh to the Father but by him.* And on other occasions he assumes to himself the glorious character and office of being *the light of the world.* The history of the world for near eighteen hundred years confirms the truth of these declarations: for, in so far as any just and worthy ideas of God, of Providence, of a future state, and of pure morality, are yet to be found among the nations of the world, they are derived from
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the Gospel of the Son of God. Even Mahometan countries are no exception to this; for whatever is good and pure in that religion is manifestly borrowed from the sacred writings of the Jews and Christians.

Now, from what is past, and from the predictions of Scripture about what is to come, we have reason to think, that the same divine religion shall be the chief mean henceforward of spreading these blessed doctrines, till the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ his Son, cover the face of the whole earth. Government and laws, philosophy and arts, may give their aid; but the spirit of Christianity must be the inspirer and conductor of all other means of civilization and improvement. No stronger incitement surely can be given to a society, which have chosen for the object of their association the propagation of the religion of Jesus, than this, That they are co-operating with the grand scheme of Providence laid before the foundation of the world, *to turn men from darkness unto light, and from the service of sin and Satan to the service of the living God.*

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The success which this noble undertaking hath already had, and which appears to the conviction of every one, from the number of schools, no less than 172, which are supported by it, and in which 7270 scholars are instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, must prove a new and powerful excitement to the Society itself to persevere with zeal and alacrity in their *labours of love*.

Besides these schools for acquiring necessary knowledge, there are twelve schools on a second patent, in which girls are taught and trained up to industry in such kinds of work as are suited to their sex, and the condition of life for which they are designed. It may surely be expected, that the view of these blessed effects which this worthy institution has already produced, and is daily producing, will excite and encourage all the true friends of religion and humanity to contribute every way in their power to the support and advancement of a design so manifestly calculated to promote both the temporal good of society, and the eternal interests of immortal souls.

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The same Subject continued.

2 TIMOTHY, i. 7.

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear;
but of power, and of love, and of a sound
mind.*

HAVING shewn, at considerable length, S E R M.
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that Christianity is well calculated
to animate those who really believe it, with
a *spirit of power*, with courage and firm-
ness, in opposition to timidity and irreso-
lution of mind, I now proceed to consider
the *second* ingredient of the Christian spirit
mentioned in the text, *viz.* the spirit of
love.

As *love*, in the New Testament, when
spoken of in general, usually signifies the
love

SERM. *love of our brethren, we shall, in what follows,*
 IX. principally treat of it in this sense :

First, By shewing that love, tenderness, and humanity, is most certainly the genius of Christianity : and,

Secondly, By endeavouring to point out the excellency of this spirit in the degree, and to the extent, in which the Gospel describes and enjoins it.

Now, the *first* of these, That the genius of Christianity is love, surely needs no long or laboured proof to a Christian audience. The primary doctrines of this religion are, That God is love, and dwells in love :— That the whole system of his government is kind and benign :—That the scheme of redemption took its rise from the original benignity and mercy of the Great Father of all :—That the Great Redeemer was animated with the same spirit of benignity and compassion, in undertaking, and in executing every step of it :—And that the consummation of this glorious plan will be the total deliverance of many myriads of the human race from sin and death, and their final establishment in a state of perfect virtue and of immortal felicity and glory. It

cannot be contested that these doctrines favour and encourage the spirit of kindness and beneficence.

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When we attend to the perceptive and sentimental parts of the Gospel, we find that the spirit of love breathes in all of them. That the precepts of Christianity tend to restrain and suppress all the malevolent passions, and to promote the culture and improvement of the kind and friendly ones, can admit of no doubt: That Christian morality strikes at the root of that selfish and worldly temper which stands in direct opposition to the spirit of love, is evident from the whole strain of the doctrine of its great Author and his apostles, as well as from the shining examples they have given of generosity and disinterestedness in their own lives.

Further, that the religion of Jesus not only aims at suppressing and extinguishing the selfish and worldly spirit, and the whole malignant tribe of passions which spring from it, but tends to cherish and invigorate all the benign and friendly dispositions, is evident beyond all doubt from the most cursory view of the New Testament. To mention

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tion all the particulars on this subject, would be to transcribe a great part of the morality of the Gospel. Let it suffice to select a few passages. *By this, (says our Saviour,) all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you love one another**. And, in another passage, he insists upon a forgiving temper as indispensably necessary in order to our acceptance with God: *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you†*. How perfectly he exemplified this sublime precept in the course of his own life, and at the conclusion of it, is well known to every one who has read the Gospel-history. The apostles of our Lord inculcate the same kind of precepts with the greatest warmth and earnestness. *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from among you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children‡*.

* John, xiii. 34.

† Matt. vi. 14, 15.

‡ Eph. iv. 31, 32. v. 1.

Further :

Further : The points of light in which Christianity places our fellow-men, are such as are suited to affect us in the most powerful and tender manner.—We are all, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, equally the children of the same great family, and equally under the protection, and at the disposal of the almighty and all-wise providence of the same great Parent of all.—We are all fellow-travellers through this state of pilgrimage, in which we are all exposed to the like wants, dangers, and distresses. We have all the like imperfections and infirmities, equally liable to fail in our duty to one another, and therefore equally standing in need of forgiveness at one another's hands.—We are all equally labouring in the same state of darkness and corruption, of guilt and mortality. And we are all equally dependent for our hopes of deliverance from these great evils, on the same great Friend and Saviour of the human race, Jesus the Son of God.

These views of our brethren of mankind are certainly fitted to bring down the most lofty looks, and to convince the proudest

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proudest of the sons of men, that, notwithstanding all the distinctions and pre-eminences on which they value themselves, they are, in reality, on a level in the most important respects with the poorest and lowest of the human race.—And all those who lay open their hearts to the full influence of such views, will feel such humane and tender sentiments arise within them, as the ancient eastern author expresses in the following pathetic words: *If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or maid-servant, when they contended with me, what then shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb*.*

It is our great happiness in the Christian world, that the sacred writings abound with such sublime precepts, and such tender sentiments as have been mentioned. But let us take care, lest, through our familiarity with them, we lose the just sense of their excellence and importance. Let us always remember that, whatever our

* Job, xxxi. 13, 14, 15.

notions

notions about these precepts and sentiments of the Gospel may be, they are surely divine instructions, and worthy to serve for lessons to the whole race of mankind. They are lessons that bear the most striking characters of that tenderness of heart, that elevation of mind, that total superiority to all selfish and worldly passions, which distinguished the divine Author of our religion; and they are the most convincing proofs, that humanity and love, in the highest perfection, is the genius of Christianity:

In the *second* place, let us allow our thoughts to dwell a little on the excellencies of the spirit of love.

1. Then, love is the most amiable and the most beautiful of all objects of contemplation. Goodness, genuine goodness, wherever it appears, charms the heart of man. The native indications of it in the features, the looks, the tone of the voice, or gestures of the body, strike every beholder with pleasure. The beauty, especially of kind and humane, of charitable and generous deeds, has ever been felt and acknowledged by all mankind. In a word, all the various emanations of a kind and

S E R M. *benign heart, in looks, in voice, in words,*
IX. *in attitudes, or actions, are pleasing to the*
view of every observer.

Hence it is, that the spirit of love, operating and displaying itself in the characters and manners of mankind, gives them their chief beauty and excellence. Where this is wanting, that artificial politeness, which is in so high estimation among the higher ranks of mankind, gives an apparent rather than a real grace and amiableness to their manners. That politeness which flows from real affection and humility will ever be found to be the most genuine. It may, indeed, want some of the exterior graces which arise from elegant attitudes and motions of the body, or from certain proprieties of voice and language. But as the essential part of politeness consists in attending to these things which may please or be agreeable, as far as is consistent with truth and integrity; in avoiding, either in words or in actions, what may hurt or offend; and in laying aside frivolous officiousness and studied formality: unfeigned good-will and affection will engage to a more uniform and effect-

effectual practice of these things, than any artificial rules and habits can possibly do. SERM.
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It must indeed be acknowledged, that, considering how ill-affected men are frequently to one another, they would be insupportable to each other without a portion of that dissimulation, which is a considerable ingredient in the fashionable politeness of the world. If men were to shew, without disguise, that envy or contempt, that aversion or malice, which, alas! they too frequently have in their hearts, they could not possibly bear with one another. It serves, without doubt, to maintain the peace and decency of society, that they mutually act a part, though far from the most sincere one. But if men would, in good earnest, apply themselves to the exercise of that mutual love which Christianity enjoins, there would surely be little occasion for that habitual insincerity in artificial professions of good-will and humility which makes up so great a part of what is called good-manners or good-breeding. If love without dissimulation really warmed our hearts, it would beautify our

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manners more effectually than all artificial rules without it can possibly do.

2. Further, in the *second* place, the excellency of the principle of love will appear, if we consider that it is not only a most amiable, but also a most powerful one. And, indeed, its power is so great that it is difficult to enumerate or describe all its mighty effects. It is an established maxim, That love begets love; and the truth of this maxim is verified by universal experience. If we shew hearty good-will and affection to those with whom we converse, or with whom we have any intercourse, we can scarce fail to receive the proper returns of good-will and kind dispositions on their part. Love without dissimulation conquers every heart. Its empire is in a manner universal. Where it is known to be the ruling principle of any character, it will gain the hearts and applauses of thousands, nay of millions of mankind, who never saw the person, nor were ever within the reach of his beneficence. But the mighty power of love appears, not only in winning the hearts of all men, when

when there is no resistance to be overcome arising from envy, resentment, or any of the malevolent passions, but it appears more conspicuously in triumphing over ill-will, resentment, and malice of the most confirmed and inveterate kind: for, if we really, and from the bottom of our hearts, *love of our enemies* (as our Saviour directs); *if we bless them that curse us; if we do good to them that hate us; and if we pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us*, we will gradually soften and melt their hearts. If we uniformly persevere in returning good for evil, the best offices for the worst, there is scarce any human creature so hardened and obstinate as not to be mollified and even reconciled at last. There is only one exception to this:—When the good man's measures of conduct and course of action continue to oppose and thwart the worldly interests and ambitious views of his adversaries; in that case, the steady exercise of the purest and most perfect goodness will have no effect. This was the state of things betwixt our blessed Saviour and the rulers of the Jewish nation, and was the reason that his ini-

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mitable and unconquerable goodness had no influence upon them. But when this is not the case, an uniform course of kindness and good offices, which carry demonstration along with them, that there are no remains of resentment at bottom, or no other wrong principle operating within, will sooner or later produce their effect, and beget love and esteem.

We may further add, as another proof of the mighty power of love, that when any one is called to the delicate and difficult office of admonishing and reproving others for their follies and vices, nothing but the workings of real affection appearing to the full conviction of the guilty person himself, can reconcile his mind to the reprover, and give real energy and efficacy to what he says. The power of love, in such cases, far surpasses the power of the finest eloquence. When love manifestly dictates the reproof, it will draw tears from the eyes of the profligate and abandoned, and even of the hardened in vice and profligacy, and make him conceive a higher degree of affection and esteem for the friendly adviser than ever he

he had before. Sometimes the successful execution of an office of this kind proves the commencement of a friendship that lasts through life.

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We may still add upon this head, that it is love which inspires the soul with generous and noble designs, and with that resolution and fortitude which is necessary to execute them. Those heroic actions which are recorded in history, and which we read with admiration, have, for the most part, been the effects of the love of one's country, of particular friendship, or of an ardent zeal for some important interests of mankind. Thus heroism, the truest heroism, derives its chief excellence and strength from the spirit of love.

Lastly. The mighty power of love displays itself in uniting and binding mankind together. A renowned leader in science or in arts, a superior of distinguished virtues and talents in any important department in society, produces a wonderful union and harmony among his admirers and adherents. The warm attachment, for instance, of all soldiers to a favourite general, or of

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all the subjects to a beloved prince,—what good-will, what unanimity of views does it produce among the soldiers or subjects? How does it make them forget their little animosities and interfering interests, and join heart and hand in the service of him who is the common object of their affection? In a word, love is that invisible, but mighty, chain which links mankind together in a thousand ways. And it is by these associations, that their personal interests, and the interest of the public, are frequently promoted in the most effectual way.

To all which we may add, that this principle of love shall at last demonstrate the whole extent of its power, by uniting the whole virtuous and holy part of mankind into one happy and glorious society, under the one great Mediator and Head, Jesus Christ the righteous. And as he is the perfect image of the invisible God, it shall through him unite them all to the great Parent of the universe. And thus love shall be the eternal and indissoluble bond of union to the whole immortal empire of Jehovah.

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3. The *third* and *last* proof of the excellency of the spirit of love is, its being the source of joy and happiness. This is a point that needs no laboured illustration or proof. We need only appeal to every one's feeling, that love is the temper, nay the very essence of happiness. Every sentiment of the human breast, in so far as it partakes of benignity, is happiness; and in so far as it partakes of malignity, is misery. If we had our choice in the manner of making ourselves happy, we could not fix upon any thing more effectual, than to have our hearts overflowing with the warmest affection to every human creature, without the least tincture of any malevolent or disquieting passions. The only thing further wanting to complete our happiness, would be the assurance of the favour of God to secure and perpetuate it. Let us suppose this attained, and then try, if we can even imagine a more happy state than that of a man *who dwells in love*, who is satisfied with his lot in life, and who rejoices in the divine administration. In such a state, surely, the mind must be open to relish, with the fullest pleasure,

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pleasure, all the enjoyments of life. And it must also be in the best disposition to do good, and to relieve the necessities, to sympathise with the sorrows, and to share in the joys of all mankind.

These are the natural and noble effects of the spirit of love : wherever it prevails, it renders the possessors amiable, powerful, and happy.

To conclude, let us not satisfy ourselves with admiring and praising the excellency of this spirit ; but let us be solicitous to transplant it into our hearts, and to exhibit the blessed effects of it in our lives. Let it ever be our assiduous care to check the first risings of all the malevolent passions, and to cherish the first motions of the benign affections.

Let us habitually lift up our souls in earnest prayers to Almighty God, that he may kindle in our hearts the sacred flame of love to himself and to mankind, and that he may heighten and increase it by the continual influences of his Holy Spirit.

In all the intercourses of society, let us embrace every opportunity that offers, and even seek opportunities of exercising our
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own friendly affections: and let us be equally careful to extinguish the beginnings of animosity and hatred, and to spread love and friendship among all those to whom our influence can any how reach. For if we set ourselves in earnest to do so, we may be assured the kind dispositions will gather strength, and will grow up till they gain the ascendancy in our souls. And under the dominion of those gentle masters, we shall be amiable in the eyes of men, we shall be acceptable in the sight of God, we shall be happy in ourselves; we shall be useful in the world; and, at our departure hence, we shall be fit to be translated into those blissful regions of the new heaven, and of the new earth, where peace and harmony, love and friendship, shall have their everlasting abode.

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We now proceed to offer a few observations on the *third* assertion in the text, *viz.* That Christianity is the spirit of a sound mind.

In entering upon this part of the subject, let it be observed, in order to prevent mistakes, that two things seem principally
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to be comprehended under the notion of soundness of mind :—that the soul is settled in such a state of freedom from the perturbation and darkening influence of all irregular passions, that it is in a capacity to judge fairly and justly of things according to truth and nature :—and, farther, that it can adhere with steadfastness to these right judgments, even in the most trying scenes of life. It will surely be admitted, that it is not the meaning of the assertion in the text, that Christianity gives us better natural powers than we would have had without it ; but only that it assists us in the free and genuine use of those powers, in whatever degree we are possessed of them.

Now, that the spirit of Christianity has a natural tendency to preserve soundness of mind, and to lead to wisdom in the conduct of life, will appear from the following observations :

First, That it is one principal end and intention of Christianity to establish such rational and solid principles of religion, as if followed out, would prevent or correct all such superstitious and enthusiastic notions as tend to relax the obligations of morality,

morality, and to substitute something else in their stead. The conceptions which the religion of Jesus gives us of the nature and perfections of God, as a Spirit possessed of all moral excellencies, lead us to conceive, that the practice of these moral virtues which makes us resemble him, is absolutely indispensable. Our holy religion not only enjoins us, in general terms, *to be followers of God as dear children; to be holy, as God is holy; perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect:* but it assures us in the most express and solemn terms, that the acceptance and favour of God cannot be obtained by rites and ceremonies, or any thing whatsoever, without holiness of heart and life: *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* is one of its fundamental principles; and it is solemnly declared to be the grand and ultimate end of the whole dispensation of the Gospel, *to purify mens hearts, and make them zealous for good works.* Our blessed Saviour stood forth, through his whole life, an undaunted champion for pure and undefiled religion, for the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith, in direct oppo-

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opposition to the superstitious, enthusiastic, and corrupt opinions of his bigotted countrymen; and it was in support of this glorious cause that he suffered even to the death. Whoever reads the Gospels with any degree of attention, must be convinced that he laboured, through his whole life, with the warmest and most indefatigable zeal to root out all superstitious opinions of every kind, and to plant in their stead the grand principle of true religion, That there can be no acceptance with God, no evidence of a title to future felicity, without a life of good works proceeding from a good heart. Whoever therefore imagines that Christianity encourages or promotes superstition, or substitutes any thing whatsoever instead of real holiness or virtue, must either be grossly ignorant of what it is, or must be prejudiced against it to an astonishing degree.

Now, it is extremely obvious, that if this one momentous and capital principle of our religion, That, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord, were firmly established in the minds of men, it would have a mighty influence on the whole system
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of their opinions, and on the whole conduct of their lives. This single principle operating with its full power, and to its whole extent, would root out multitudes of foolish, trifling, and pernicious opinions; it would correct innumerable weaknesses and follies; and would be a chief mean of strengthening and perfecting human reason itself. The effects of it on life would be no less signal. It would fix men at once in a right choice as to the great ends of life, and as to the means of accomplishing them. No ends could be proposed, or means employed, but such as the strictest virtue and purest religion would approve and recommend. The spirit of the Gospel is therefore favourable in a very remarkable manner to soundness of mind and wisdom of conduct.

Again; let it be observed, in the *second* place, that the spirit of Christianity has a powerful tendency to mortify and subdue all those irregular passions, which prove the chief hindrances to the best exercise of our rational powers.

Every one who has given the least attention to human life, must have observed, that the taste for the affluence and riches,

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for the power and dignity, and for the splendid accommodations and elegancies of life, rises frequently to such an immoderate height, that it makes men lose sight of the true dignity of human nature, and engages them in the pursuit of these perishing objects with as great ardour as if the possession and enjoyment of them constituted their chief happiness and glory. That vehement passions of this kind darken mens understandings, enfeeble their moral sentiments, and lead them to form a thousand false judgments and wrong estimates concerning the real worth of things, is abundantly evident from daily experience and observation. And when these worldly passions gain an ascendancy in the minds of such men as are at the same time under the full dominion of self-love, of pride and ambition, they not only disturb and blind their understandings; but, if they happen to meet with unexpected and severe disappointments and mortifications, they sometimes rise to such a height of violence as terminates in total distraction and madness in its most frightful forms.

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The Spirit of Christianity is the most natural and effectual remedy against the excesses of all such passions. For it is manifestly the design of this divine institution, to raise the minds of men to a strong and commanding sense of the excellence of virtue in itself, and to a lively faith of the glorious rewards awaiting it in a future state. It is a fundamental maxim of the morality of the Gospel, That the chief happiness and chief glory of human nature lie in the virtuous endowments and dispositions of the heart, and not in worldly possessions or enjoyments of any kind. Whoever therefore has imbibed the spirit of this religion, will have his supreme affections set on the things which are above, on spiritual and eternal objects: The effect of which must necessarily be, that the love of inferior and earthly objects will abate, and cease to maintain the empire in his soul. *We cannot serve two masters: we cannot serve God and Mammon.* In so far, therefore, as men are really under the influence of Christian principles, those irregular passions, which darken their understandings, which weaken their moral powers, and in-

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capacitate them for forming right judgments with regard to the true ends and true happiness of life, will be subdued and mortified. And when the obstructions from these passions are removed, the nobler faculties of the mind will exert themselves with vigour, and govern the life according to the dictates of truth and wisdom.

These happy effects of the spirit of the Gospel, in keeping all the passions within such bounds as not to stop or disturb the proper exercise of the finer powers, may have been of unspeakable benefit to the human race in former ages, and may continue to be so, till the consummation of all things. The minds of thousands may have been established in such a state of moderation and self-government, as has prevented their passions from rising to such hurtful or such fatal excesses, as their natural degree of strength might have occasioned, if they had not been mellowed and subdued by the sacred and powerful influence of the Gospel. And if the spirit of Christianity should more and more prevail, as there is good ground to hope, these blessed effects will also more and more increase. At the same time it is

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to be feared, that many persons in Christian countries make so little improvement of their spiritual advantages, that they suffer their pride, their ambition, their revenge, and worldly lusts to hurry them on to the same heights of madness, as if they had never heard of the Christian religion. When, indeed, that most deplorable state of human nature, total phrensy, takes its rise from some strange disorders in the animal frame, without any aid from ungovernable passions, Christianity can have no influence to prevent or cure it, at least in any other way than as it enjoins us, *to mortify the flesh, to bring the body under, and keep it in subjection.*

It was observed above, that strong self-love and pride have a great influence in raising the worldly passions to an immoderate height. It is worthy of particular attention that the Spirit of Christianity interposes its friendly aid here also, by forming men to sober and lowly thoughts of themselves. The maxim and precepts of the Gospel show sufficiently, that humility is an important and essential part of the Christian disposition. Thus the Apostle exhorts, *I say unto every man that is among you, not*

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to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly. Rom. xii. 13.

This sobriety of mind, though perhaps it cannot be reckoned a distinct virtue from all others, is yet a distinguishing part of a right state of mind, and is the best groundwork on which the superstructure of a virtuous character can be raised. Mark the person that is void of this sober sense of himself, and you must be very undiscerning in characters, if you do not perceive in him many foibles at least, if not many vices. The chief ingredients of this sobriety of mind are these two: humility, and equity of disposition.

Those who retain an habitual sense of their constant dependence on Divine Providence, of their utter insufficiency for their own happiness, of their manifold imperfections, and of their accountableness to God for their whole behaviour, cannot be high-minded. Such persons will not discover a propensity to compare themselves only with those who are their inferiors in natural powers, acquired accomplishments, and moral attainments, that they may feed their vanity with their own real or fancied superiority.

riority. They will rather be disposed to compare themselves with those who are their superiors in all these respects; and, not even satisfied with this, they will chuse to measure their attainments by that standard of moral perfection which is planted in their own bosoms, and which is clearly displayed in the purity and perfection of the Divine law. These comparative views will soon make them sensible how little cause they have for indulging themselves in vain, self-complacent, and self-important imaginations. On the contrary, these sober views of things will inspire them with sentiments of genuine humility. Instead of entertaining self-magnifying thoughts, they will feel pious regret upon the account of their being still so far short of the standard of moral excellence; they will feel the deepest sorrow when they reflect on those manifold failings and infirmities of which they are still conscious; and, under these humbling views, they will earnestly implore the mercy and forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ, through whom they hope to receive the atonement.

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It must be obvious to every one, on the least reflection, that the humble state of mind just now described, will be a perpetual restraint on those boilings of resentment, those pangs of pride and ambition, and those florid imaginations about worldly happiness, which strangely blind the understanding, and occasion the grossest departures from rational judgments and wise conduct.

Again, equity and fairness of mind is also a great security against wrong judgments and wrong conduct in the affairs of life. Observe a man under the dominion of self-love, self-will, and self-interest, and you will see him form judgments so manifestly and reproachfully partial, as must astonish every impartial spectator. On the other hand, observe a man of a fair and equitable disposition, and you shall see him give judgment with readiness and alacrity against his own interest, when justice or equity requires it. In the language of Sacred Writ, *He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.* That humility and equity are fundamental virtues in the Christian scheme of morality,

morality, will not be called in question. The Spirit of Christianity, therefore, must be acknowledged to be conducive, in a remarkable manner, to soundness of mind, and to improvement in real wisdom.

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We shall only add, in the *third* place, that the Spirit of Christianity produces a pleasing composure and serenity of soul, which has the most friendly influence on the best exercise of our rational faculties.

The real Christian is not only delivered from the tumult of impetuous passions, but he is solaced with prospects and hopes of the most comfortable and peaceful kind. In this state of tranquillity and peace, he has the full command of all his faculties, and can exercise them to the best purposes, and in the best manner. Every one's own experience assures him, that whatever disturbs his mind, darkens and enfeebles it; and, on the contrary, whatever composes his mind, brightens and invigorates it. Every one's observation either on himself or others, informs him also, that deliberate forethought, sound judgments, and wise purposes, cannot dwell amidst hurry and confusion; and that they are only to be

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found in the habitations of order, quietness, and peace. As the eye, in a serene and unclouded sky, sees every object within its reach in the most distinct manner; so the mind sees every thing clearly when it is free from the perturbations of passion, and the disquietudes of care and anxiety. Thus it appears that the Spirit of Christianity is conducive, in a variety of ways, to soundness of mind, and wisdom of conduct.

What an admirable thing then is the religion of Jesus, which, while it makes *us wise unto salvation*, makes us also *wise as to this world*, so far as our natural faculties are capable?

All that has been said of the excellency of the Spirit of the Gospel has been confined to the three ingredients of it mentioned in the text. But if we were to display the Gospel morality in its full extent, as comprehending piety, purity, equity, humility, and the whole train of Christian virtues, many new and striking excellencies would rise up to our view. And if we were to add to the Divine morality of the Gospel a delineation of its peculiar doctrines, and of their excellence and suitableness to the
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wants and exigencies of mankind in their present state, we would clearly discern that it was justly proclaimed by the angel at our Saviour's birth, to be *glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.*

If we were, for instance, to shew that the Gospel is light to those who were sitting in darkness; that it is pardon to the guilty; that it is the power of the Spirit of God to purify and sanctify those who groan under corruption and a body of sin; and that it gives the assured prospect of an immortal life in a glorious resurrection-state to those, who, through fear of death, would be all their life subject to bondage; were we, I say, to paint Christianity in these interesting lights, we would clearly see that it is *worthy of all acceptation*, and that it is the only source of consolation to the heart of man, which can never fail him in any circumstances or situation of life, or at the approaches of death and dissolution itself.

To which I might still add, that if we were to compare the Gospel, both as to its doctrines and as to its morals, with the most admired schemes of ancient heathen moralists, its superior excellence, in both respects,

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spects, would appear in the most convincing light. But as there is not room for treating these important topics in one discourse, we shall conclude with a few brief reflections on what hath been said.

1. Then, has the Gospel a manifest tendency to form men to the most amiable, the most excellent, and most useful dispositions? It must be total inattention, want of discernment, or want of taste for excellence, even of the highest order, that can make any man insensible of its worth and excellence. Those therefore who employ their time and talents to depreciate this excellent and useful institution, and to bring it into contempt, cannot be deemed true friends to mankind and to the most important interests of human society.

2. If the Gospel is really so excellent, and so useful, as has been said, let us beware of entertaining prejudices against it. Let none deceive themselves with an opinion, that prejudices are harmless and innocent, or at least that they cannot be criminal in any considerable degree. Let none imagine, that that liberty of thinking, which

which is the unalienable right of mankind, SERM.
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intitles them to think and to believe as they please, and whatever they please. On the contrary, every one of us ought to reflect with the utmost seriousness on the sacred obligations we are under to exercise our understandings impartially in the search of truth, and to judge according to the evidence which God hath laid before us.

It is true, that we are not accountable to any human jurisdiction for our thoughts, and the use or improvement we make of our understandings. But, at the same time, it is equally true, that we are as really accountable to God for our ways of thinking, as for our ways of acting. There will be a mighty difference found at the Divine tribunal, betwixt liberty of thinking and licentiousness of thinking, betwixt judgments formed from the just exercise of our rational powers, and those which have been formed under the influence of worldly and selfish passions. Nothing can be more equitable than that those, who, through corrupt passions, have shut their eyes against the light, which would have directed their steps, comforted their hearts, and led them
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SERM. in the path of life, should suffer all the
IX. consequences of their own wilful conduct.
He who is the truth hath assured us, that
it shall be the ground and cause of the con-
demnation of many, *that they have loved
darkness rather than light, because their deeds
have been evil.*

To conclude, Let us make the various excellencies of the Spirit of the Gospel the frequent and favourite subject of our most retired and serious meditation. And in these hours of retirement, let us lay our hearts fully open to the impressions which the contemplation of its Excellence will naturally make upon us. The minds of most men are susceptible of impressions from moral Excellence. And when we perceive that a very high degree of it shines through the whole Gospel, we will be disposed to hearken with fairness and impartiality to the many other striking proofs of its truth and divinity. And as our hearts are more and more smitten with the love of truth and virtue, prejudices will vanish, and our faith in the divine mission of Jesus will be gradually confirmed, *till we are filled with peace and joy in believing.* Amen.

S E R M O N X.

On the Obligation and Reasonableness of
Public Worship.

Preached in the College Chapel, October 14, 1770.

HEB. x. 24, 25.

*And let us consider one another, to provoke
unto love and to good works : not forsaking
the assembling of ourselves together, as the
manner of some is ; but exhorting one
another.*

AMONG the circumstances which distinguish one age from another, none are more striking than the particular vices and follies which are predominant, or the particular virtues and laudable practices which are unfashionable in it.—That an unhappy indifference to religion, or at least

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to the public offices of it, marks the character of the present age, will bear no denial. It is not however meant to brand the present generation as more degenerate in all respects than their forefathers. On the contrary, it may be deemed a peculiar blessing, to live in an age so much enlightened as the present with every kind of knowledge. Never, perhaps, since the Apostles days were religious principles better understood. And, blessed be God, that narrowness of mind, those four dispositions, that bitter spirit of persecution and deadly hatred on account of mere difference of sentiments in religious disputes, which have been the disgrace and plague of former ages, are now greatly abated, and, in some measure, put out of countenance. Those gloomy notions of religion too, which threw a dark veil over its natural beauty, or made it a series of sorrow, are now exchanged for more just and more comfortable prospects.

This much, and more may in truth be said in favour of the present age. But is there not reason to fear, as it too frequently happens, that we have run from one ex-

treme into another? In the room of the bigotry and gloom of our ancestors, we have sunk into a shameful indifference to divine things. *They* laid perhaps too much stress on the external offices of religion. *We* seem inclined to look upon them with disregard, if not with contempt. But surely we ought to consider, that, if the means of religion are neglected, religion itself must languish: and where religion is gone, virtue wants its noblest and best support, and must sicken and die.

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It is evidently the intention of the sacred writer, in the words I have read, to recommend to all Christians a regular and habitual attendance upon their religious assemblies, for the purposes of public worship and instruction. He plainly blames those who deserted the Christian assemblies, as was the manner of some even in his days. In our days, the number of such is greatly encreased. It is hoped, therefore, it may not be improper or unreasonable, at our first sacred assembly after the vacation, to enforce this apostolical exhortation by attempting,

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I. To shew the reasonableness and advantages of regular attendance on Public Worship and instruction in our weekly Christian assemblies. And

II. To make some application of what may be said to ourselves, as an audience chiefly composed of Masters and Scholars.

I. In order to be convinced that the worshipping of God, in a public and social manner, is a reasonable practice, let us first consider, That mankind appear evidently to be intended for paying homage to their Creator. We not only claim to be distinguished from the brute creation, but we boast that we are a more dignified rank of creatures. Now, one principal part of this elevation, of this superior dignity, consists in our capacity of knowing, praising, and obeying the great Creator of all things, and in rejoicing that we are under his all-perfect government. It is certainly a momentous and interesting consideration, that, of all the inhabitants of this lower world, man is the only creature who can contemplate the grandeur, the beauty, the order and harmony of the universe: he alone can trace out the perfections of the
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great God in his works: he alone is en-
dowed with faculties which qualify him to
raise his thoughts above visible things, to
adore the invisible Creator of all things,
and rejoice in the persuasion of his bound-
less power, wisdom, and goodness. With-
out man, all these astonishing scenes which
we behold around us, would have been
displayed in vain, as to any inhabitant of
this earth. Man, therefore, as he only *is*
capable of being, seems intended *to be* the
high-priest of nature, and is placed in this
magnificent temple of God, that he may
offer up the incense of thanks and praise
for himself, and for the brute, and insen-
sible part of the Creation.

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These, and many other reflections, which
might have been added, make it evident
that man is capable of devotion, and de-
signed for the acts and exercises of it. All
those persons, therefore, who neglect and
contemn religion, contemn what is the
chief glory of human nature. For man's
capacity to know and rejoice in God is the
noblest distinction and perfection of his
nature, and was never intended to lie use-
less or unemployed. And those philoso-

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phers also, who take no notice of man's capacity for religion, and of his propension towards it, in their delineations of human nature, omit one of its most important and most striking features. For it is from a connection with the religious principle in our nature, that many other parts of our internal frame derive their chief excellence and usefulness, particularly *conscience*.—But to proceed.

Mankind, not only as *individuals*, but as *social creatures*, are plainly formed for social worship, or the joint adoration of their common Creator and continual Benefactor. It is obvious to every one, that it is natural to mankind to communicate their thoughts, sentiments, and feelings to one another on all other subjects; and surely it will not be alleged that our devotional sentiments are the only ones that should be concealed. Indeed, we are so formed, that our feelings of the devout kind discover themselves in a very visible manner, in our countenance and gesture, even when there is no direct intention to communicate them. We can scarcely therefore entertain the least doubt, that one great purpose of mankind's being placed

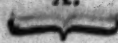
placed in society, with a power of impart-
ing their thoughts and sentiments, not only
by words, but by the expressions of the
countenance, was, that they might excite
and quicken in one another's hearts just
sentiments of reverence, love, and grati-
tude to the great Father of all.

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Besides, the Propensity of mankind to
seek after Society, and their Experience of
benefits derived from it in all their other
affairs, plainly shew the natural obligation
which lies upon them to associate for reli-
gious purposes. Wherever therefore men
are brought together into societies for other
valuable purposes, there is a fitness and
propriety in their being jointly exercised
in grateful acknowledgments to their com-
mon Parent, and in joint earnest petitions
to the Author of all their blessings, for the
continuance of the favour of his provi-
dence: for as there are in such societies
common blessings and common wants, the
just sense of these will be most properly
manifested by joint acknowledgments and
joint supplications to the great Author and
Benefactor of the world.

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 To which it may be added, That this has been the sense of men in all *ages* and in all *nations*, who have been so far civilized as to be raised above the savage life. Public thanksgivings and supplications have been appointed in all governments in the world, at least on extraordinary occasions. The public forms of worship established in all nations, and the sacred rites publicly performed, declare sufficiently, that it has been the universal sense of mankind, that public adoration and acknowledgments are due to the Deity.

And it is further to be observed, not only as a confirmation of all the preceding reasonings, but as what may be sufficient to all Christians, independent of them, that public worship is expressly enjoined by the authority of Divine Revelation. The institution of the sabbath in the earliest ages of the world is taken notice of in sacred history: that the seventh day of the week was set apart and consecrated to sacred purposes under the Mosaic dispensation is well known to every one. And that the Christian religion enjoins its votaries

tares to make a public profession of it, is perfectly evident. We are required, Rom. x. 9. if we would have an interest in the promised salvation, not only to believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, but to *confess this with our mouths*: and our Saviour himself has assured us, Matt. x. 32, 33. *That whosoever shall confess him before men, him will he confess before his Father who is in heaven; and that whosoever shall deny him before men, him will he also deny before his Father in heaven.* That Christianity was publicly professed in worshipping assemblies, from the times of the apostles downwards to the present times, is an historical fact concerning which there can be no doubt. The apostle, in the verses before the text, exhorts the Christians to whom he was writing, *to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering; for he is faithful that hath promised; and to consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of themselves together.* So far have we spoken as to the obligations to Public Worship.

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II. Let us now turn our attention to the advantages and usefulness of it.

On this head it is very obvious, that regular attendance upon Public Worship and public instruction, is one of the most natural means that can be used to preserve a sense of God, and of the obligations of religion and morality on the minds of mankind. All devout affections and dispositions are cherished and strengthened by repeated acts and exercises: so that every act of worship, even in private, contributes to promote a devout temper of mind. Public Worship is adapted to produce stronger emotions: for all our passions work more strongly in society than in solitude. When we observe the native marks and symptoms of devotion in others about us, our own devotion is heightened and prolonged. A strong passion of any kind, prevailing among multitudes, spreads itself and catches the spectators. Thus social devotion has a tendency to diffuse a sense of religion and religious obligations upon all, who in any way or with any view are present at it. Since, then, it is the tendency of social worship to give additional force to our devout

devout affections, and to spread them SERM.
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among others, it must be admitted, that joint acknowledgments of our dependance on God, and of our subjection to his holy authority, together with joint thanksgivings for the manifold blessings we enjoy in common, when made with solemnity and earnestness, have a natural tendency to encrease and strengthen our pious dispositions, and thus habitually impress our minds with a deep sense of all moral and religious obligations.

But further : As Public Worship is fitted to impress the minds of hundreds or thousands at once with a lively sense of their subjection to the authority of God, and of their obligations to do his will, so it is also suited to unite men closely in love and affection to one another ; and consequently has a great influence towards maintaining peace, good-will, and friendship among them ; and thus engaging them to a ready performance of the duties which they owe as members of society, and as standing in particular relations to one another. Nothing indeed is better adapted to refine and strengthen all social affections than so-

SERM. ^{X.} cial worship. The sincere worshipper of God is called, by the precepts of Christianity, to suppress in his breast all the risings of unfriendly and malevolent passions when he approaches to God in acts of worship. If he would hope to be an acceptable worshipper of that God who is love and dwells in love, he must not only stifle all unsocial dispositions during the time of religious service, but he must resolve to suppress, and, if possible, extinguish them at all times. For our great Instructor teaches, that if *we bring our gift to the altar, and there remember that our brother hath ought against us, we should leave our gift before the altar, and go away and first be reconciled to our brother, and then come and offer our gift**.—But besides the authority of the precept, religious considerations and impressions have a natural tendency to sweeten our dispositions towards our fellow-worshippers: for when we seriously reflect, that even such persons, against whom we may think we have reason to entertain grudges, are now worshipping *their* and *our* Creator

* Matt. v. 23, 24.

along with *us*; that they are perhaps as sincere as we are; that they are as much the children of his great family; as really entitled to his favour; and, perhaps, as acceptable to him, or more so, than we can pretend to be; such reflections have a natural tendency to soften our hearts, and make us forget our animosities. Our little interfering interests and competitions seem trifling and inconsiderable, when we consider ourselves in the august presence of the Great Judge of all the earth. When we are desirous above all things to please God, we become unconcerned and indifferent about lesser interests.

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Further: Nothing can be more suited to humble the pride and insolence of the rich and great, than to reflect upon themselves as, equally with all others, in the presence of that God *who is no respecter of persons*. A just sense of the presence of a great impartial Judge annihilates all worldly distinctions, and places the high and the low quite on a level. When, therefore, the proud and haughty see those persons whom, on ordinary occasions, they are accustomed to overlook and despise; when they see them

SERM. ^{X.} them engaged in the worship of God along with themselves; it must naturally suggest to them, that they are creatures of the same make with themselves equally the offspring of God, and having immortal souls equally capable of the same high attainments and sublime enjoyments arising from the knowledge, love, resemblance, and friendship of their Maker:—that they may be as far advanced in every thing really virtuous, and may be in all respects as worthy in the eye of God, who judges not by outward appearances, as they themselves can pretend to be. Such considerations, which naturally arise on the occasion, have a tendency to moderate, and even to root out that pride and vanity which is apt to shoot up in the minds of those, who are accustomed to contemplate their outward advantages with too selfish a complacency. The distance betwixt the highest and lowest of mankind must appear nothing to those who attend to the infinite distance between God and the most exalted order of creatures. And thus Public Worship is adapted to excite humble sentiments in the hearts of the highest of mankind, and to unite them

them in the bonds of kindness and charity with the lowest. SERM.
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To which it may be added, that the devout intercessions which are put up for all the different ranks, conditions, and states of men in public prayers, even to the praying for our enemies, are calculated to interest our hearts in the welfare of our whole species, and to engage us to do them kind offices as occasion offers.

Lastly, The advantages of having the most salutary instructions, on every part of human duty, enforced with the most powerful considerations, laid before the minds of whole assemblies at once, are so manifest, that it is not necessary to insist further upon them.

Upon these accounts, the establishment of assemblies for the Public Worship of God, and for instruction in all the duties of the Christian life, must be acknowledged, by every unprejudiced person, to be one of the best methods that can be thought of for polishing and civilizing mankind in this world, as well as fitting them for the pure enjoyments of an eternal world. The frequent returns of stated times, in which multi-

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multitudes of people are assembled to converse together in the most friendly manner, to hear their duty explained, and to join in the adoration and praises of the Supreme Being, are the most proper means that could be contrived to spread knowledge, religion, and humanity among all ranks of men. That such religious establishments have a manifest tendency to produce the happiest effects, cannot be denied; that they have actually produced them in some degree, cannot well be called in question.

In many cases it may be difficult to point out the particular positive good effects, that have actually been produced by these religious institutions. But to convince us of the importance of them, let us suppose that all Public Worship and Public Instructions, that all the exhortations, admonitions, and reproofs, which are usually given in Christian congregations, were totally interrupted for a considerable time—for half a century, or even for twenty years—we should soon see that the worst effects would follow; that a sense of God and providence, of Jesus Christ and his
divine

divine religion, a sense of virtue and hu- SERM.
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manity would be greatly weakened, if not entirely extinguished; and that the generality of the people would degenerate into a kind of barbarians. It has been the acknowledged sentiment of the wisest part of mankind, that, were it not for that sense of religion and order which is principally preserved, so far as it is preserved, by public forms and habits of worship, men would lose it entirely, run wild, prey upon one another, and soon become little better than the savages.

The great usefulness and importance of regular weekly assemblies for religious and moral purposes, was clearly discerned and acknowledged by the Roman emperor Julian, commonly called the apostate, as inveterate an enemy as Christianity ever had. He saw the manifest good effects which the regular Public Instruction and Public Worship had upon the Christians in his age; and therefore recommended it to his heathen high-priest to imitate the practice of the Christians, by appointing the philosophers to give stated weekly lectures for the instruction of the heathen people, and
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in support of paganism. This appeared to him the most probable method to restore the credit and influence of the heathen religion, which had fallen into decay and contempt. Thus we have the testimony of the keenest enemy of Christianity in favour of the great advantages flowing from regular assemblies for Public Worship and Public Instruction.

To conclude : Let us always be on our guard against every thing that may lead us into a disregard of religion itself, or of any of the means which God hath appointed for supporting it. Let youth especially beware of that looseness of principle, or entire want of principle, which is too prevalent and fashionable in the present age ; while too many *sit in the seat of the scorner*, and try to laugh at all religion, and while too many seem disposed to learn their impious lessons, let us hold fast our integrity, and reverence religion, as having an eternal excellence in itself, and as essential to the present and future felicity of mankind.

Further : In the earlier seasons of life, let us beware of that spirit of giddiness and
levity

levity which too much characterises the present age. How few, especially among the younger sort, have made any sober reflections on what they are—what they are designed for—what is their situation in life as accountable creatures—or what are their prospects beyond this life:—how few, I say, have made such serious reflections!—how many suffer themselves to be carried down with the current of fashion, in an endless career of amusements, if not in a vicious indulgence; and reach the borders of eternity ere they have formed one serious thought!—From men of such characters, what hope can there be of any sincere regard for the sacred institutions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?—What hope can there be of usefulness to human society?

Again: Let us especially be on our guard against the love of idle pleasure—that determined enemy of every thing serious. That the love of pleasure is predominant in modern life, will hardly be denied. Prosperity and wealth have produced their common effects on ungrateful man. Instead of raising our hearts in thankful devotion to the bounteous Giver of all good,

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we have sunk into the lap of sensual sloth and loose indulgence. Hence the great multitude of votaries of mean enjoyments, who prefer the lowest amusements to the noblest exercises of the soul. Let us condemn such mean pursuits, and form our minds to relish the manly and noble pleasures we are capable of enjoying as rational, social, moral, religious, and immortal creatures.

Again: Beware of that pride and self-conceit which make some think themselves above all need of Public Instruction; especially that of the religious kind. Those who have the least real knowledge are most ready to think themselves wiser than their teachers. Such vanity is the natural product of a little soul, and is commonly the mark of a weak and superficial understanding. But, in fact, the intention of attending upon the institutions of religion is as much or more to awaken, preserve, and cultivate pious and virtuous sentiments, as to furnish the understanding with new knowledge.

Beware, therefore, of these and of every other thing that may lead to a neglect of
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the means of attaining to wisdom and virtue, and a sober sense of things. Frequently reflect, that, however gay prospects and sensual pleasures may flatter your unexperienced hearts, yet, sooner or later, you will find that there is no fixed rest or bliss to the soul, but in the practice of virtue, and the hope of the favour of the Almighty. For though, in the sunshine of youth and prosperity, religion may seem no way necessary to your happiness; yet it is most certain, that nothing else can cheer the gloom of hoary age, soften the bed of affliction, and smooth and enlighten your passage into the world of spirits. And there can be no just ground to expect religion to maintain its power over our hearts, and produce its proper fruits in our lives, without the use of those means and that culture, appointed for those purposes by infinite wisdom and grace.

May we all understand and practise true religion in such a manner, as that we may be able to say at the last, we have exercised ourselves, to have consciences void of offence, towards God and towards man. Amen.

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The same Subject continued.

HEB. X. 24, 25.

And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another.

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ON a former occasion it was proposed to treat this subject in the following manner: I. To point out the reasonableness and advantages of regular and devout attendance on Public Worship and Religious Instruction in our weekly assemblies; and II. To make some application of what shall be said to our own circumstances, as an audience made up chiefly of Teachers and Learners.

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The former point I endeavoured to establish from the following considerations: That man alone, of all the creatures which inhabit this earth, is a religious creature, honoured by the Creator with the noble privilege of contemplating his works, and of adoring and praising his glorious perfections conspicuously displayed in them: That it plainly appears, from the structure of the mind and heart of man, that it was intended he should associate for religious as well as for other purposes: That this has been the sense and universal practice of mankind; public forms of Worship have been established, and sacred rites performed, in all nations and ages: to all which it was added, That Public Worship is expressly enjoined by the authority of Divine revelation. And thus the light of reason and of revelation concur in establishing this important point. These are the obligations to Public Worship, which were formerly explained and illustrated.

And as to the advantages and usefulness of Public Worship and Public Instruction, it was observed, that they are obviously the most natural means which could be devised

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to preserve a sense of God, and of the obligations of religion and morality, on the minds of mankind. This was illustrated from several considerations, which I shall not take up your time in resuming.

The advantages of Public Assemblies for the Worship of God and for moral instruction are so obvious, that we find the wisdom of Government in our own country, to this very day, considers the new erections of parishes, and the multiplying the places for Public Worship, as one of the most effectual means of civilizing those parts of our native country, which are still in such a rude state, as to stand greatly in need of further civilization and improvement. And, indeed, the bringing mankind frequently together for friendly intercourse, and with dispositions to appear well in one another's eyes, and then inculcating upon them the lessons of religion, virtue, and humanity, in the strongest manner, must have a natural tendency to polish and civilize them.

These things are confirmed by the testimony of those judicious and discerning men * who have visited the Highland parts

of Scotland. * Dr. Webster, and others.

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of our country, and made a progress SERM.
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through them with a view to facilitate the execution of the purposes of Government. They generally found the people less industrious, more slothful, rude and dissolute in their manners, more subjected to slavery and oppression, and more attached to popery, in proportion to their distance from places of Public Worship. These are facts, which prove in a more satisfactory manner than any abstract reasonings, the manifest usefulness and importance to society of establishments for Public Worship and Instruction.

If we look farther abroad, and consider the low and uncultivated state of the savage nations in more distant parts of the globe, it will appear extremely probable to every considerate person, that the surest means of civilizing them that can be devised is the forming of them into little societies; and when formed into these societies, impressing their minds, at stated times, with moral and religious sentiments by regular forms of Worship, and Weekly Instruction. The Jesuits, whose wisdom in chusing the properest means for accomplishing their

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ends, has never been called in question, but on the contrary has been admired and celebrated; the Jesuits, I say, have followed this method in training and instructing the wild Indians, and have found it very effectual for that purpose. Witness their success in Paraguay, where they have formed a whole nation of the most savage Indians into a near resemblance of the most polished Europeans.

If your time would allow, we might add to the great public advantages of religious assemblies, the pleasure they afford to all individuals who are well disposed, and who are heartily engaged in the devout exercises performed in them. The pleasures of rational devotion are real, great, and various. The state of that man's mind who contemplates the amiable perfections of the Deity, who relies with confidence on his providence and the promises of the Gospel, and who rejoices in the humble hope of the Divine favour, must be exceedingly delightful. Besides this, the calls and exhortations to duty, the precepts and maxims respecting a holy life, frequently repeated

repeated and enforced from the authority of Revelation, must make lasting good impressions upon sincere and honest minds.

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And, according to the rules and spirit of the Gospel, they who hope to be regarded by God as acceptable worshippers, must banish from their breasts all the rough and rancorous passions of envy, hatred, and revenge. For as our great Master instructs us, in the passage already quoted*, we cannot approach to God and worship him acceptably, while any secret grudges lodge in our breast against our fellow-worshippers. It must indeed be a pleasant state of mind when all the boisterous passions are calmed, and when a gentle gale of kind affections breathes on all around us. Besides, when we heartily join with the true servants of Jesus Christ and the sincere worshippers of God to pay him homage in the assemblies of his people, it is pleasing and consolatory to consider ourselves as numbered among the faithful, and as joined with them in the noblest of all employments. It is delightful for every one of us to reflect within himself, "while

* Matt. v. 23, 24.

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 ship with them, and *truly our fellowship*
is with the Father and with his son Jesus
Christ."

The obligations to attendance on Public Worship, and the advantages of it to societies and individuals, have been the longer insisted on, because it is of mighty importance in the conduct of life, that the minds of men be established in right principles, and that they act from those principles. It is not enough that we attend upon religious institutions from custom or fashion, or from some vague notions of decency or propriety in conforming to the manners of the world. Far less is it sufficient that we give our attendance from interested views, to preserve that credit and reputation in the eyes of men for religion and probity, that may be necessary for promoting our worldly interests. When we act only from such low views, we cannot reap any real benefit or virtuous improvement to our minds; nor can we be acceptable in our religious duties to that God who searches

searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, and loves truth and sincerity in the inward parts. Besides, when we are prompted chiefly by low and worldly motives, our conduct cannot have that uniformity and stability which flows only from right principles seated in the heart. They are right principles alone that can ensure beauty, uniformity, and consistency to the whole of life.

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We proceed now to

The Third thing proposed, even to make some application of what has been said to ourselves.

First, then: Are mankind, by the very frame of their nature, *religious* as well as social creatures; and are there many and great advantages arising from the *Christian* institution of Public Worship and Instruction? Hence we may learn, that it is the duty of those who have the work of education committed to their care, to be ever attentive to cultivate religious principles in young minds, and to give them such views of the excellency and importance of religion in general, and especially Christianity, as may engage them to reverence,
to

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pose them to join in all those offices of devotion, whether in private or in public, which it enjoins. Those who are possessed of superior learning and knowledge are solemnly bound to spread the light of truth with fidelity and diligence, and to apply the motives to rational religion and virtuous practice, with all the clearness and strength of which they are capable. Young people are susceptible of strong impressions, either of the virtuous or vicious kind. The interests of religion and welfare of society depend upon the principles and habits which take possession of the minds of youth. Let it therefore be a principal concern of the instructors of youth, to train them up in rational maxims of religion, in the love of Christian virtue, and in such a course of life as will render them blessings upon earth, fit them for leaving this world with decency, and qualify them for entering into another and a better world.

The instructors of youth are called to consider, that a momentous trust is put into their hands, since the whole cause of religion

religion and virtue, and the welfare of society, must stand or fall according as youth are well or ill educated. Public instructors ought to reflect, that it is their office to establish right principles, and form right habits, in the minds of such young persons as are committed to their care; and that this must have an extensive influence upon society in the present and in future generations.

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The youth, who receive an university education, are such as are designed for the upper stations in society; they are such as must sit in seats of judicature,—or such as must stand before them to plead the cause and defend the rights of their fellow-citizens;—or such as must become teachers of religion, and preside over the morals of several districts of the state;—or such as must rule over counties and cities, take care of the public peace and general welfare of the country: in a word, university education is given to those who, in various stations, are to be the governors, the directors, and examples of the rest of mankind. The notions which such persons imbibe in their youth, the manners to which they are

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formed, and the example which they are disposed to set, must have a wide-spreading influence upon the great body of society, who have not had the advantage of a learned education, and who are to be directed and conducted by such as have had it.

University Instructors ought therefore to consider themselves in a very important and interesting light, as called to educate and form those ranks of youth, whose principles, sentiments, and manners will spread their influence through the whole society. Their teachers ought therefore to be solicitous, above all things, first, to guard them against all such principles or notions as may tend to unsettle their religious faith, or weaken the foundations of virtuous practice; and then to inspire them with an abhorrence of impiety, debauchery, and all kinds of vice: and to kindle in their hearts a warm zeal for every thing virtuous, honourable, and praise-worthy.

Secondly, From what has been said on the Reasonableness, Importance, and Usefulness of Public Worship, let young people beware

beware of entertaining prejudices against it, or indulging themselves in habits of neglecting it. Let them always consider that their present and future happiness, and their usefulness in after-life, may depend upon the notions which they imbibe, and the manners to which they are formed, during the course of their education.

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Particularly, let them always remember, that it is in vain to pretend to characterize or define human nature, without taking in, as a leading stroke, its capacity for religion and propensity towards it. The capacity of man for religion is what principally marks his superior dignity and great pre-eminence over the inferior creatures. This must ever constitute man's greatest glory, and therefore it must constitute also the highest part of his felicity. It is the established order of all the works of God, that whatever thing constitutes the perfection of any being, constitutes also its chief happiness; that the perfection or chief excellence of any creature should lie in a certain power or capacity. And that that creature should be in its best and happiest state, while this its noblest power lies altogether

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together dormant or dead, is a thing impossible, a thing that can never happen in the works of the all-wise God. It should therefore be received as an indubitable maxim, and a maxim of the highest importance, that a just regard for God and for virtue, as his law, is the true wisdom, the true perfection, and happiness of man. *Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man**.—The whole duty, the perfection, and the chief happiness of man.

Some people in the present age seem to imagine, that it is a mark of spirit and of a superiority to vulgar prejudices, to condemn all religion, and to forsake the assemblies for religious purposes: and such persons are apt to value themselves upon their superior light. But let them take heed, *that the light which is in them be not darkness*. Nothing is more common than to find people of this turn of thinking, professing a very flaming zeal for the interests and improvement of human society, while they shew great coolness and indifference for every thing that relates to religion. Such

* Eccles. xii. 13.

persons

persons should consider, and they will find, if they examine things with candour, and judge from undoubted facts, that no kingdom or state ever flourished long, after a reverence for God and religion was worn out among all ranks of people, the lowest as well as the highest. A state may subsist in tolerable good order, even after impiety begins to prevail among some of the upper ranks of men; but if once the great mass of the people, both in cities and in the country, be infected, and irreligion become universal or even general, it may be said without the gift of prophecy, that the downfall of such a state can be at no great distance. Let young people therefore embrace it early as a first, and as a fixed principle, that the real interests of society and the interests of religion are inseparably united; and that all the proper means of preserving a sense of religion on the minds of mankind, should ever be held in reverence. As the institution of the Sabbath and assembling for Public Worship have already been shewn to have a natural tendency to improve the morals and manners of mankind, let an institution so highly
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useful be regularly observed by the higher, as well as by the lower, ranks of men; by the younger, as well as by the elder. Let it ever be considered that true policy, true patriotism, friendship and beneficence to men, good-manners, and a deference to human authority—all concur with the principle of duty as Christians, to engage us to observe and reverence the Lord's Day, and not to forsake the assemblies for Christian worship which are held on that day.

As to the pretence, that there is no need for our attendance upon Public Worship in the congregation, because every one so inclined can pray in private, and read better sermons than they can generally expect to hear from the pulpit: It is sufficient to answer, in the first place, that this is setting our own private opinion of the matter in direct opposition to the authority of Divine revelation, which expressly commands us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. But in the second place, private exercises of devotion, and private instruction, do not answer the purposes of Public Worship, which are, to
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own our religious sentiments before the world; and, by joining with others in doing this, to maintain and spread a general sense of religion among our cotemporaries, and thus contribute to transmit it to succeeding generations. The influence of example is wholly lost by what is done in retirement. And if every one should think and act in the same way, these, and all the other good effects of public institutions for religious purposes which have already been represented, would be lost to the world.

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Let us suppose that an *anniversary* was appointed by public authority to commemorate some great and happy event to a whole nation, such as the *Revolution* was to Britain; suppose any particular person should refuse to join in the solemnity of that day, and should pretend that he commemorated the glorious event at home in private, and that he read books there, on the principles of the *Revolution*, which did more to confirm him in *Revolution* principles than any thing he could see or hear at the public assembly; surely this would not be admitted, in that case, as a satisfactory ex-

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cuse, nor could the ends of the appointment of the anniversary be answered, if every person who could employ himself well at home, should use such a pretence for absenting. The application of this to our present purpose is obvious, and needs not be insisted upon.

To conclude: Let young and old reverence the apostolical injunction in the text, and cheerfully comply with it. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: and may God enable us to yield sincere obedience to this and every other divine command. Amen.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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